BERNARD SHAW

MAJOR BARBARA

(Critical Study)

KITAB MAHAL

Masterpiece
Critical Study

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

MAJOR BARBARA

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- Biographical Sketch & Works
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- Questions with Answers

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NEW KITAB MAHAL
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE.

Printed at : Alico Printers, Lahore.

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1

George Bernard Shaw : A Biographical Sketch

Childhood and Youth

George Bernard Shaw was born of Irish Protestant parents in Dublin, the capital city of Ireland, on 26th July, 1856. Ireland at that time was firmly united with England. Shaw's family had originally come from Scotland, but his Irish birth and childhood had a strong influence on his whole outlook. The Protestant Anglo-Irish were a narrow class surrounded by a Catholic people who regarded everything English as foreign, and Shaw lived long enough in Ireland to look at the English people with the eyes of an outside critic who saw many weaknesses and absurdities unnoticed by Englishmen.

From his unsuccessful father and a "wicked uncle", he inherited his Shavian sense of fun and anti-climax and his superficial blasphemy, from his mother a deep love and knowledge of music, which, with his keen interest in the spoken and written language, was to prove his most enduring love and one of the greatest influences on his work. He himself remarked that he inherited his mind and character from his mother. She was an able musician, and Shaw got to know many great musical works at a very early age and received an excellent musical education. His father, though by all accounts a lovable man, was unsuccessful in practical affairs, and Shaw's parents could not maintain the traditional standard of the family. The behaviour of his more prosperous relatives towards his parents seems to have made him very early a severe critic of the class to which they belonged and of respectable society in general.

Education

Shaw did not get on well in school, and was always near the bottom of his class ; but he read widely, heard a great deal of first-rate music and had a passion for pictures. Though a bad pupil, he

was far from lazy, and the things he learned were to be useful to him in later years. When he was fifteen years of age, he left school and became a clerk in the office of a land-agent. He hated the work from the first day, but he did it, nevertheless, very well, and soon rose to a responsible position. He stayed in the office for more than four years, until he decided to give up his job and go to London in order to become an artist.

Early Struggles in London

When Shaw was sixteen years of age his parents separated because his father's income was insufficient to maintain the family. His mother and her two daughters went to London in order to earn their living by singing and giving music lessons. In the spring of 1876 Bernard Shaw joined them, and he lived with his mother for more than twenty years. At first he tried to get commercial employment, but he did not really want to exchange an office desk in Dublin for a similar one in London, and soon gave up the attempt. Instead of earning his living, he settled down to write his first long novel, *Immaturity* (1879). The first novel was followed by four others, but all were commercially rejected; the best are *Love Among the Artists* and *Cashel Byron's Profession*.

Apart from writing his novels, Shaw spent his time partly in the reading room of British Museum, partly in debating societies and in listening to speeches. Thus it was quite natural that his attention was attracted by the socialist movement, which at that time was making quick progress in England.

The Fabian Socialist

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were at that time both living in London, but Shaw first became a follower of the new ideas through an encounter (1882) with Henry George. From George's book *Progress and Poverty* Shaw soon progressed to Marx's *Das Kapital*. Nevertheless, he did not join the "Marxist" movement, but a small society of middle class socialists called the Fabian Society.

Although this group was small, it contained a number of exceptionally clever and interesting people, and its real leaders were Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb. Under the influence of these two men the Fabian Society developed its own kind of socialism. The Fabians were opposed to the Marxist idea of the class struggle. They appealed not only to the workers but to all men whom they could persuade that their aims were just and reasonable. In spite of their small numbers, they had a powerful influence on the growing labour movement in England and supplied many of its future leaders.

Writing For 'The Star'

Almost from the foundation of the Fabian Society in 1884, Shaw took a leading part in its work ; edited *Fabian Essays* (1889) and wrote many well-known socialist tracts. It was through his socialist activities that most of Shaw's novels were printed for the first time—in order to fill spare columns of small socialist magazines. It was also as a Fabian that Shaw joined the staff of a new Liberal evening paper, *The Star*, founded in 1888. The editor refused to publish his political articles, but suggested that he should write a column on music. It was as a music critic for *The Star* newspaper that he made his mark on the intellectual and artistic consciousness of his times. In this position as music critic he soon delighted and infuriated but always interested his readers, and his articles over the signature of "Corno di Bassetto" became widely known.

The Critic

After nine years of poverty and failure, Shaw received, through the help of his friend William Archer, an appointment as critic of pictures and books. This enabled him to make both ends meet. His career as an art critic lasted for four years (1885-88) ; it was followed by seven years as a music critic (1888-95) and three years as a dramatic critic (1895-98). These years established Shaw's reputation as a writer. To this period also belong *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* and *The Perfect Wagnerite.*

Marriage

When Beatrice Webb, the wife of Shaw's best friend, met him a few years later, she noted that women were attracted to him. He was an impressive man, six feet high, with a broad-chested figure, grey-blue eyes, and red hair and beard. He often seems to have given offence to strangers by his sharp wit—though probably not to women. His letters to Ellen Terry show him as a very charming man, always attentive, playful as well as serious, and with a delicate understanding of character.

In these letters to Ellen Terry appears from time to time the shadow of an Irish lady by whom Shaw felt strongly attracted. Charlotte Payne-Townshend was a graceful woman, perhaps not a beauty but very attractive. She was a socialist, although a very rich woman, because she was a rebel by nature. Their affectionate friendship led to marriage during the lengthy breakdown of Shaw's health in 1898. Although Mrs. Shaw was rich, Bernard Shaw was in no way dependent on her, for he was earning at that time more than he needed. After his illness, he could afford to give up his work as dramatic critic and to live on the revenue produced by

his books and the performances of his plays in America and Europe: soon he would be a rich man.

The Early Plays

Shaw had begun as early as 1885 to write the dialogue for a plot invented by his friend William Archer, who shared, amongst other things, his admiration for Ibsen. The common effort did not come to much, but seven years later Shaw, by then an experienced critic, completed the play on his own. He gave it the very effective title *Widowers' Houses*, and a small theatre of advanced ideas gave two performances of the play, which had a very stormy reception. His friends praised it as a masterpiece but the "respectable" Press attacked it without mercy. It was followed soon afterwards by *The Philanderer*, which could not get a single performance at the time, and by *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, which was banned by the authorities as "immoral".

After this Shaw wrote *Arms and the Man*, which was his first considerable success with the English public. During the next five years (1895—1899) he wrote six plays, which put him into the front rank of the writers of his time. Three of these plays—*Candida* (1894), *The Devil's Disciple* (1896), and *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898)—are generally regarded among his best works.

On the Road to Fame

When the Boer War broke out in South Africa (1899—1902), Bernard Shaw surprised most of his socialist friends by supporting the aims of the British Government, and the difference of opinion on this point was almost great enough to split the Fabian Society. Shaw maintained his political interests at a time when he was rapidly becoming a figure of international reputation. After *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, which he finished in 1899, he did not publish any new play until 1903. In that year he completed *Man and Superman*. With *Man and Superman* Shaw entered a period of great creative power. His next play, *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) was immensely successful with the British public. From then on until the year 1912 Shaw wrote an astonishing number of great plays; these plays include such works as *Major Barbara* (1905), *The Doctor's Dilemma* ((1906), *Misalliance* (1910), *Androcles and the Lion* (1912), and *Pygmalion* (1912). In addition Shaw wrote three other long plays which are not in the same class—*Getting Married* (1908), *The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet* (1909), and *Fanny's First Play* (1911).

When the war broke out in 1914, Shaw was without doubt the greatest and the most famous literary figure of his time.

The Summit of Achievement

In 1917 Shaw completed a play called *Heartbreak House*, which must be regarded as one of his most powerful creations. It was followed in 1921 by *Back to Methuselah*. With *Back to Methuselah* Shaw had reached a position where he could afford to give the public what was good for it instead of what it wanted. In *Saint Joan* (1923) Shaw produced a work combining deep thought and feeling with the qualities of a most effective play.

In 1925 Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, but gave away the money to start the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation. In 1931 he visited Russia, and in 1932, with Mrs. Shaw, made a world tour which included the United States and a memorable address on political economy at the Metropolitan Opera House. Greater than any of the plays written in the last years of his life are the two prose works : *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, and *The Adventure of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*. The later plays except for *The Apple Cart*, have scarcely received adequate public stage presentation.

Shaw sought to be not only a great radical reformer, like Dickens, synthesizer of all that was best in the thought of his times as well. He died at the age of ninety-four on November 2, 1950. Among the literate no set of initials are more widely known than "G. B. S."

2

The Chief Works of George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

Shaw is such a voluminous writer that it is not possible to discuss critically all the plays written by him. Hence only those of the plays which are considered important in the literary circles are briefly commented upon in this chapter.

1. Widower's Houses

The importance of Bernard Shaw's first play is that it proved to himself that he was a playwright. The theme of this play is a problem of conscience in a society that does not allow for conscience. The play is an attack on the slum-landlordism of the society and upon individual. The play is farcical in conception, but a comedy in execution, presenting a problem in actual life. It is uncomfortable, and is rightly called "unpleasant", because none of the characters is in the least admirable. Its weakness is partly in the plot but chiefly in the leading character, for Trench arouses no sympathy and we do not in the least care what happens to him.

He began writing this play when he was twenty-eight, but put it aside for five years considering it as hopeless. He again picked it up, quickly completed it and gave two performances at the Royalty Theatre in December, 1892. Later on, he wrote on a copy of the first edition "My first and worst play". As a first play *Widower's Houses* has remarkable qualities. Its dialogue is original, its construction thoroughly workmanlike, and though by no means a masterpiece, it still holds the stage.

2. The Philanderer

Shaw wrote another unpleasant play *The Philanderer* in 1893, in which he deals with the subject of marriage and its limitations particularly for women. This play moves at a quiet pace and

contains several acting parts. It was not produced publicly until 1907. The play was an example of the new humour—Shavian humour—that had come into the theatre. The nature of this humour was to be disconcerting, exasperating and too true to be good for every one. This humour is not hurtful, for it does not contain any malice. The theme of the play is love and marriage, which have been treated as a game between the sexes within a highly unpleasant fantasia upon Victorian standards ; for beneath its playfulness sex is given the serious treatment that did not become popular for another thirty years.

The play's true qualities appear in its characters, dialogue and situation. Shaw's friend William Archer did not like it, for he considered it vulgar, dull and worthless. Even Shaw himself was not pleased with this play. He wrote about this play : "A combination of mechanical farce with realistic filth which quite disgusted me."

3. Mrs. Warren's Profession

The first unpleasant play was about slums, the second about love and marriage, and this, the third, is the play about prostitution. This is the best of the three. The play was written, Shaw says, to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and maltreating women so shamefully that the poorer of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together. Society, and not any individual, is the villain of the piece.

Censor created difficulties in the way of this play. The trouble was not so much the attack upon prostitution, but because the play was a vehement attack on social conditions which made prostitution possible and upheld it. Thus its indictment was of every man as citizen, not of those engaged in the trade. It was too revolutionary for the time.

4. Arms and the Man

This play is anti-romantic comedy. It was produced in 1894 and was Shaw's first success in the theatre. It is a light-hearted play, but what we retain after reading or seeing it is not only a pleasurable feeling from having experienced a witty piece of writing, but also the fact that Shaw pricks the bubble of false romanticism. He shows us that Raina's ideas of the battlefield are inaccurate by letting Bluntschli tell her of the realities. He shows us that Sergius needs to make love to the maid, as he finds the higher love too fatiguing. To reinforce further the idea of romantic attitudes about love being deluded, he shows Major Petkoff's servant, Nicola, ready to give up his fiancee, Louka, for profit.

5. Candida

This is Shaw's best constructed play. It observes the unity of time and place ; it is highly interesting from a technical point of view as a play of anti-climax. Shaw, in this play, displays the naked conflict between the poet and commonsense :

> The story is that the Reverend James Mavor Morell, a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England, finds a young man sleeping on the Thames embankment. He takes him home and discovers that he is a poet, a nephew of a peer, who does not understand the everyday affairs of life. Young Marchbanks, the poet, becomes a visitor to the house and devoted to Candida, Morell's wife and mother of two children. She mothers the poet. One day Marchbanks tells Morell that he is in love with Candida, that he, the poet, understands her and that Morell, the husband, does not, and demands that Morell give up his wife to him. Morell treats the matter lightly, but becomes angry when he discovers that Marchbanks is serious, and is moved to shake the silly boy, to Marchbanks terror. When she comes in he tells his wife what has happened, for he too becomes serious, and learns not only that the news does not surprise her, but that she knows his, Morell's weakness so well that he cannot believe that none-the-less she still loves him. In his masculine obtuseness he demands that Candida should choose between him, the honest, popular, industrious husband, and the weak, disliked and misunderstood poet. She replies, having already said to her husband that he should put his trust in her love for him, that she will give herself to the weaker of the two. Marchbanks knows that he has lost and goes away with a secret in his heart.

This relates the play to *A Doll's House*, in which Ibsen's theme is the same. In Ibsen's play the wife leaves her husband when she makes the discovery ; in Shaw's she holds to him, for Candida has more wisdom than Nora (the lady of Ibsen's play), having known the truth all along. What is Marchbanks' secret ? Part of the play's attractiveness lies in the mystery.

6. Caesar and Cleopatra

The play is written in the classic manner, in Five Acts, and opens with a short scene, which introduces the name of the conquering Caesar and the (at the moment) lost Cleopatra. The First Act is in the shadow of the Sphinx, which awakens Cleopatra who has been sleeping between the great paws. Cleopatra asks Caesar to come up, which he does, and tells him her fears of the barbarian Caesar and his soldiers, not knowing that she was talking to Caesar

himself. Caesar says that he will teach her a way to prevent Caesar from eating her, and hearing the sound of the approaching army the terrified queen brings him to the palace. Afterwards Caesar takes charge and shows Cleopatra how a queen should behave, and she discovers who he is. It is important to note that Caesar is the protagonist—the play is his—and it is of equal importance that he is not old.

In the Second Act, Ptolemy, the boy-king and his sister meet in the palace in Alexandria and quarrel; Caesar makes them behave. Caesar's position is discussed. and the news comes of the burning of the Library of Alexandria. Caesar remains unperturbed.

In the Third Act, we see Cleopatra on the edge of the quay trying to get across to Pharos island across the harbour, where Caesar is. She is not allowed to go, but goes to Caesar rolling herself up in a carpet; when the carpet is unrolled Cleopatra comes out. Then the Egyptians attack the island, and Caesar, his way of escape cut off, jumps into the sea and Cleopatra is thrown in after him.

In the Fourth Act, six months later, Cleopatra in her palace at Alexandria is invited to plot against the victorious Caesar, which she refuses to do. When Caesar hears of it he spares the plotter, but Cleopatra gets her nurse to murder the man. The angry Caesar threatens to leave Cleopatra, and his captain kills the nurse. This Act is very well constructed and contains the climax, for Caesar knows what he has to do.

In the final Act, Caesar is about to leave for Rome, he has forgotten Cleopatra. Cleopatra, however, appears but will not bid him farewell. Caesar tells her that he will send Mark Antony to her, and she throws herself into his arms.

In this play Shaw wrote history in the idiom of contemporary history. He declared that he had in mind that Shakespeare had not been equal to Caesar, he never knew human strength of the Caesarian type. This was a curious criticism.

7. Man and Superman

This is a play with a definite philosophy of life and is an extremely ambitious work of Shaw. Shaw made it clear that it was possible to write a play about sex without evading the sexual problem. This play was written by Shaw at the suggestion of his friend A. B. Walkey. We gather from the preface that Shaw is going to treat the Don Juan theme paradoxically. Instead of showing us a Don Juan who pursues women, he is going to use the play to illustrate his idea of Creative Evolution. His Don Juan is to be ensnared by a woman against his conscious will. The relations between the sexes are displayed as the "love chase of the man by the

woman". In the central "dream" the theme is lifted into the realm of "Shavio-Socratic dialogue", as Shaw calls it. This scene, called the hell-scene, can be performed independent of the comedy, as the comedy can be performed without this scene.

"Man is not victor in the duel of sex"—is the idea around which the simple comedy is built. Shaw did not, however, stop at the mere statement of woman's function in relation to man. He developed the philosophy of Life Force, the force that relies upon men and women for achieving its ends, and upon man recognising himself as an instrument for the creation of something greater than himself. Hence the idea of Superman.

8. Androcles and the Lion

The major theme of the play is that men must have something worth dying for to make life worth living. In its inception the play was meant for children, and is, therefore, a short piece. Shaw takes the story of Androcles the Greek slave, who, coming across a lion in the jungle suffering agonies from a thorn in his paw, removes the thorn and goes on his way, to be captured some time after by the Romans and thrown to the lions in the Coliseum at Rome. There he meets the lion who recognizes him with joy, to the amazement of the audience. It is the time of the persecution of the Christians, which provides Shaw with the opportunity to present Christians with the knowledge of their fate before them, who discuss their religion with Romans. One of the Christians so far forgets himself when turned into the circus as to slay six of Caesar's pet gladiators, which so delights the Emperor that he crowns the repentant man with laurel pardons all the Christians, and proclaims Christianity as the State Religion. Androcles gets thrown to the lions because he is not a Christian, for the people must not be denied their pleasures ; but the lion saves him.

9. Pygmalion

The central theme of the play is human relations ; in particular, love, as the title suggests. A philosopher-scientist creates an image that falls in love with him, and what to him is a scientific experiment turns out to be an exercise in the natural affection of the human heart. They play is meant to speak for itself.

When the play opens, a group of people are standing under the portico of St. Paul's Church, waiting for the rain to stop. Among them are a lady, her son and daughter, a flower girl, Colonel Pickering and Henry Higgins, author of Higgins's Universal Alphabet. The Colonel and Higgins strike up an acquaintance.

Next day at Higgins's laboratory, he and the Colonel are having a technical discussion when the flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, appears.

She says she wants to be a lady in a flower shop, but can't get a job, so she has come to Higgins to teach her. To her alarm he pounces on her as an excellent subject, and undertakes to make a Duchess of her in six months. Very soon the girl's father, Alfred Doolittle, a dustman, arrives to inquire about his daughter. He gets a five-pound note, which strikes him as generous.

In the Third Act, at Higgins's mother's house, Higgins turns up unexpectedly to say that Eliza is coming. Presently Miss Doolittle is announced, a lovely creature. Certain conversation takes place before the party breaks.

In the Fourth Act, at the Wimpole Street Laboratory, Higgins, the Colonel and Eliza return after her successful society appearance as a Duchess. But they find Eliza, however, not at all satisfied. Higgins loses his temper. Pygmalion has come to life and he does not like it.

In the final Act, Higgins appears at his mother's house to tell her that Eliza has bolted. Without his knowing it, she has fled to his mother for succour. Immediately after him comes Alfred Doolittle, sent from Wimpole Street, to complain that he has been left a legacy by an American language fanatic ; he goes off to marry the woman who had lived with him as Eliza's step-mother. Higgins is finally left alone with Eliza. It is thought to be left uncertain whether Eliza may marry Higgins. Shaw's idea certainly was that she did not. In the epilogue the dramatist makes it clear that she married Freddy and became joint proprietor of a fashionable greengrocery business.

The plot of the play is simplicity itself. The theme of the play is the creative element, and the bones of the plot are well-clothed and moved by intelligence.

10. Back to Methuselah

This is Shaw's longest and most important play in aim and scope. It is five plays in one, and requires a different theatre from any that exists at present. The play is a biological treatise, 'a contribution to the modern Bible'. The first word of that religion is that the universe makes itself out of nothing, and therefore man can make himself out of what he is. That is Creative Evolution.

Back to Methuselah is a legend of Creative Evolution. Dramatically, the play is overwhelmed by its theme. There is no action and the talk hardly moves it, but the entire work glows with intellectual light. The play is more alive than the preface, and those who say that Shaw is better in his prefaces than in his plays finds no support for their argument here.

11. Saint Joan

Saint Joan is the last religious play written by Shaw. It was written immediately following Joan's canonisation by the Catholic Church in 1920 and was first produced in England in 1924. The play has always been popular with actresses seeking a vehicle for their talents. This is the play which is liked even by those who otherwise do not like Shaw's plays. The play has a sincerity and a sense of tragedy. The play sticks mainly to recorded historical fact, although Shaw obviously has to compress incidents and re-arrange material in order to achieve dramatic effect. It is a chronicle play in Six Scenes.

In this play Shaw is concerned with the question of Christian belief and its effect upon those who believe. He is primarily interested in showing the differences between Joan's ideas of Christianity and that of the Church. As pointed out by him that in the given circumstances, there was no option before the Church than to burn Joan as a heretic since she would not do as the Church told her. The play has variety, humour, interesting well-drawn characters, and the action progresses clearly and inevitably towards Joan's trial. The play is a record of what mankind does to its geniuses and Saints.

12. The Apple Cart

In this play Shaw upsets the apple cart of democracy—not only democracy but royalty too. In the play the monarch gets the better of his democratically elected ministers. The play is set in the palace of King Magnus in the last quarter of the 20th Century. People do not pay much attention to the politics. Poverty has been abolished from England. But the cabinet is in revolt. The King is presented with an ultimatum, but the King's decision to abdicate and contest election as a private gentleman upsets the apple cart. They cannot permit him to become the virtual dictator of Britain. So they withdraw the ultimatum.

In the play there is not much of physical action, but the play is enliven with the lively dialogue and movement, that the audience is charmed into listening, and to prevent anyone from getting tired, the rough-and-tumble interval shakes everyone up.

3

The Evolution and Development of British Drama

Background

Drama in England does not begin until the tenth century, and the impulse which brought it into being was completely independent, uninfluenced by any force from without. At the same time we cannot dismiss the thought that centuries before, the ancient Athenians had seen the stage evolving in their own culture, and had brought that stage to a high level of achievement. From Greece this stage was passed on to Rome, and although there it lost its initial power, it pursued its activities upto the time, when the Empire actually fell in the fourth century, under the attacks of the barbarian hordes. The ultimate source of the drama which arose in the tenth century is similar to that which brought the Athenian drama into existence. Though the earliest efforts of the English drama were wholly native and innocent of classical influence, we cannot escape references to the Greek and the Roman after the period when, in the sixteenth century, knowledge of their theatrical activities was brought to the attention of English playwrights.

Emergence of Drama

In Greece, both comedy and tragedy took their rise from religious ceremonies. We may think of the latter as starting from a chorus of worshippers standing or moving in a circle round the altar of a god. The first movement towards the dramatic came when one member of the chorus separated himself from the rest uttering lines to which the chorus collectively replied. Once this single "actor" had established his position, the rest was simple; two actors, and then three, made their appearance and with them formal dialogue took shape. On them the attention of the spectators was focussed, and the chorus lost its original position as the protagonist.

Tragedy

Tragedy emerged out of a religious observance, and to the end it remained integrally related to the service of the gods. Audiences

derived delight associated with a feeling of awe and wonder. The stories told in these tragic dramas were for the most part restricted to a set of series of legendary themes. Since these tragedies were fundamentally religious exercises, they were presented on special days of festivals. Then was introduced "Orchestra" and theatres were specially designed for the purpose.

Comedy

In Athens, at other festivals, comedy also flourished—a comedy, lyrical and fantastic which found its master in Aristophanes. Those satirical, exuberant, and often burlesque plays, inspired many other writers and we find a reflection of it in Elizabethan and other periods. Aristophanes' comedies are known as "Old Comedy", but when the city state of Athens declined, a "New Comedy" took shape. In this type, fantastic, lyric element vanished, the extravagant characters, the Birds and the Frogs and the rest of Aristophanes' imaginary figures were abandoned and the impossible plots were laid aside. Instead, realistic plots based on the contemporary social life were chosen and the audience's attention was held by clever twists and turns in the action. We notice its influence on the comedy of social manners, that flourished in the seventeenth century, and it may also be seen to have connections with the Elizabethan Comedy of Romance.

The Drama of Greece

This drama of Greece proved to be the chief model for the Roman theatre, and it was through Rome that classical achievements of Greece were handed down to later generations Ancient tragedy meant, not the plays of Sophocles, but the closet drama of Seneca. Later on, Seneca and Terence and Sophocles came to influence the English drama, but that time lay several centuries ahead. In the tenth century when the medieval plays first came into being, a completely fresh start had to be made.

Tropes and Liturgical Plays

Like the drama of the Greeks, the medieval British drama developed out of the religious services of its time. Obviously, it was a creation of the Church. For men and women of the Middle Ages, the Church was everything. There may have been grumblings concerning corruption among the clergy, and even anger at all the rabble of lecherous and greedy hypocrites, who sought under its cloak to fleece the poor, but here, after all, was rest for the weary solace for the afflicted, bread for the hungry, succour for the oppressed ; here was not only the Church, but art and amusement. The Church was ready to

provide for people all the delight as well as spiritual uplifting it could by means of art and letters. Morever, it was ready to show to an uneducated folk the Scriptural story in visible wise, thus counteracting the lack of vernacular versions of the Holy Writ. More especially they must have seen the necessity, on the great feast days of Christmas and of Easter, of bringing before the congregation the salient facts of the New Testament story.

From a very early period various liturgical developments may be traced, all potentially conducive to the establishment of a dramatic form. Of these, most significant were the so called "tropes" which, particularly in the ninth century, permitted an extension in music and even in language, of the service appropriate to the Easter ceremonials. It was out of such tropes that there arose, in the tenth century, the very first modern play, the *Quem Quaeritis*. To call this a play may seem strange, since it consisted of only four lines, yet when we examine it carefully, we must come to realise that it includes all the essential ingredients of drama, the setting of place of action, the presentation of fictional persons interpreted by performers, and the use of dialogue. One priest, standing near the altar, personates the Angel guarding the tomb of Christ, and towards him walk three other priests, personating the three Maries, Chants and Angel.

Here are the seeds of all the elements necessary for further growth. All the ingredients mentioned, were later on lengthened and developed into full-length religious plays.

Mysteries and Miracles

Medieval folk were lacking in means of entertainment, and naturally they flocked in to watch liturgical performances. Thus very soon the churches were found inadequate for the accommodation of all the men and women anxious to see the shows. Thus the performances were carried outside into the spaces surrounding the Church itself. This meant, however, that even though the clergy still provided the actors, the plays were inevitably divorced from the services of which originally they formed part.

The actors then, were no longer restricted groups of Priests and Monks; large bodies of eager amateurs had taken their places, and in their hands the scope of the drama was mightily extended. The Medieval theatre had started with a brief four-line playlet introducing as characters only an Angel and the three Maries; very soon the whole story of the Bible, from the creation of Adam on to the Resurrection of Christ or the Last Judgment, was being given dramatic shape on the Corpus Christi festival, held each year on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday; on such festivals amateur shows were presented.

In this way, during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries the mystery cycles, generally called Miracle *Plays* in England, came into being. The term Mystery is somewhat difficult to explain and define, but in all probability it embraced the concept both of a religious ceremony and of a special art, skill or function.

The Bible supplied the material of the mysteries, which often expounded the mysteries connected with religion. Miracles consisted of the legends of Saints in whose honour they were acted. The earliest of such plays in the vernacular exist from the thirteenth century. Latin was soon displaced by the vernacular.

The flourishing period of English Miracle Plays begins with the practice of their performance by trading companies in the towns. Of this practice Chester is said to have set the example (1267-76) which was followed by many other towns. Four collections, in addition to some single examples of such plays, have come down to us—the *York* (middle of 14th Century) plays, the so called *Towneley* (14th Century), *Chester* (14th or early 15th Century) and *Coventry* (15th or 16th Century) plays. They exhibit the entire course of Bible history from the Creation to the Day of Judgment. Hell was frequently displayed in the English miracles, with or without fire in its mouth.

English Moralities

In some of the mystery plays occasionally one or two personifications, such as Dolor or Misery intrude and the appearance of such characters leads us towards the next development in drama, that of Morality Play. Already in the fourteenth century there are records of Paternoster dramas, designed to reveal the triumph of the Virtues over the Vices, and the first years of the fifteenth century bring to us the interesting *Castle of Perseverance*, which shows us the principle of Mystery Plays being applied to a new kind of subject matter. Characters in these plays were not taken from the Bible. Instead they were taken from mankind at large. On one side were grouped the persons of an evil angel, Malus Angelus, Mundus (the world), Belial, and Caro (the Flesh) whose minions were the Seven Deadly Sins ; to the other side came a good angel, Bonus Anglus, the Six Divine Graces and so on. At the drama's conclusion a heavenly debate involved Mercy, Justice, Peace, Truth before the person of God (Zeus), seated on His Imperial Throne.

About 1450 came *Mankind*, in which the hero listens for a time to the beguilements of a rascally crew consisting of Mischief, New Guise, Nought, and Now-a-days, and is eventually brought to repentance, receiving the blessing of Mercy ; while towards the close

of the period Henry Medwall produced a two-part play called *Nature* wherein the hero, at first brought up by Nature, Reason and Innocency, turns to worldly Affection, Pride and Sensuality, rioting with them until finally Meekness, Charity, Patience, Occupation and Liberality become his guides.

Therefore, the characters in the Morality Plays were all allegorical abstractions, the chief purpose of whose appearance on the stage was that of teaching the audience, morality and religion. In interest and dramatic power the Moralities fall below the Miracles, but they left Scriptural narrative and religious dogma behind—the writers of Moralities had to invent a plot. All kinds of aids were made use of to overcome the tedium. Scene painting developed to some extent. Attempts were made to individualise allegorical characters with a view to arousing greater interest in them. The infant drama, thus, escaped through the Moralities from the limitations of the Miracle Plays.

Interludes

The Act of 1664 refers to "Players in their interludes" and in 1494 King Henry VII's actors were described as "Players of the Kyngs enterludes", and here we first encounter a dramatic term of very considerable importance. The word 'Interlude', strangely seems to be exclusively English. Whether originally it meant only a play, carried on between several characters, need not concern us ; what is important is the fact that from the close of the fifteenth century until about 1575 it came to have a quite definite significance as the type of play, relatively short, suitable for performance by a small acting company at a Lord's house. Comic relief was often provided in the Moralities by means of an Interlude in which the Devil (borrowed from the Miracle Plays) had an attendant, Vice who delighted the audience by the tricks he played on the Fiend. In course of time the Interlude got detached from the moralities and in the hands of John Heywood, took literary form. These Interludes were often acted by household servants.

Early English Drama

It does not mean that all other theatrical activities declined or vanished. Mystery Plays continued to be performed even in the sixteenth century. In fact, the early years of the sixteenth century show us a vast and variegated growth of all sorts of theatrical ventures.

From the eighties of the preceding century, the University of Oxford was displaying an interest in academic shows, and Cambridge soon followed suit ; the members of the Inns of Court early discovered the delights of dramatic activities ; several of the larger schools brought play-acting into their curricula and the children of

the royal chapels similarly were encouraged to present their stage offerings; the household of Sir Thomas More may not have been singular in the attention it paid to these early theatricals, and at a slightly later date, at least a few worthy religious teachers, such as John Bale, recognized that the drama could provide an excellent means of promulgating moral or theological opinions. Between 1475 and 1575 the drama was being fed from these many sources.

In seeking to trace the growth of dramatic writing during this period, it is not possible either to follow a strictly chronological progress or to keep distinct the various types of play cultivated by the different kinds of performers. All we can do is to treat the early Tudor Plays, roughly from the beginning of the sixteenth century upto near the accession of Elizabeth in 1559.

Early Tudor Drama

A start may be made with the first three plays extant in printed form—*Everyman, Fulgens and Lucrece* (a copy of which came to light in 1919) and *Hick Scorner*. The first of these is a play, still esteemed and acted; stands with one foot in the fifteenth century and one in the sixteenth. Although it associates itself with the moralities, yet in its form it is more "dramatic" than that of *The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind and Nature*—it points towards something new. It shows us Death commanded by God, approaching Everyman, anxiously Everyman seeks solace and help from his companions, but Fellowship, Kindred, Goods, and all worldly things forsake him; in the end only good deeds, accompany him over the passage of the grave. The second play *Fulgens and Lucrece* was intended for presentation by a group of amateurs in a private house. In it a humanistic theme is exploited: a maiden Lucrece being confronted by two lovers, Publius Cornelius, an aristocratic gallant, and, the more lowly born but virtuous Flaminius. It is a kind of dramatic debate between lovers. The maiden finally decides the question by offering her hand to Flaminius. It appears to be the work of a skilful dramatist. The third play *Hick Scorner* was intended for performance by professionals. In it, Pity, Contemplation, and Perseverance meet to bewail the evils of the time, when suddenly Freewill pushes his way in. Soon he is joined by Imagination and later by Hick Scorner himself, a merry character who amuses the spectators. This trio band put Pity in the stocks. The plot ends happily. Perseverance and Contemplation return to rescue Pity from the stocks while Freewill is converted from his evil ways.

Therefore, we see that the tradition of what may be styled the "amateur morality" established in *The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind and Nature*, continued in several directions. Then comes John Skelton's *Magnificence* (probably written about 1515) which introduces a central character, a Prince Magnificence, led astray by Counterfeit Countenance, Cloaked Collusion, Courtly Abusion, and

Folly, brought to Poverty and Despair, and eventually embracing Good Hope and Redress. Skelton's work must cede place to the still more vital *Satire of the Three Estates* (1540-50) written by Sir David Lyndsay.

Out of such plays developed the chronicle history plays, such as *Kynge Johan*, written by John Bale. Its main emphasis is upon the evils of Catholicism, rather than upon pride and magnificence. Some of the morality type plays sought to promulgate humanistic concepts and to plead for the pursuit of learning, such as John Redford's *Wit and Science* (1540) and John Russell's *Nature of the Four Elements* (1517).

Heywood's dramatic essays breathe the same air. *Witty and Witless* (1533) takes shape as a simple debate between an intellectual and his opposite ; yet a further advance is made in *The Play of the Weather* (1533) where the debate is extended and associated with groups of characters. Similar is the theme of the *Play of Love* and *The Four PP*. *Weather* and *The Four PP* have a raciness of dialogue and characterization that are almost Chaucerian. In any case, all the plays mentioned above form an early Tudor group, predominantly English in spirit and treatment, unaffected in their construction by classical influences.

It was chiefly through the Schools and Universities that these influences gradually spread out. Classical, neo-classical and native elements are blended in the work of Nicholas Udall, successively Headmaster of Eton and Westminster. His *Ralph Roister Doister* (probably 1558) was probably written for his Westminster boys and is the first English Play divided into Acts on the classical model. Another attractive Biblical Play, *Jacob and Esau* has features in common with *Roister Doister* and may well be from Udall's pen. The vitality in this new dramatic development may be seen even more clearly in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. In another group, represented by *Common Conditions*, *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* and *Sir Clyomon* and *Sir Clamydes*, romantic subjects sometimes combined with allegorical features, were boldly but unskilfully handled.

Early English Tragedy

If English Comedy intermingled traditional native elements with those borrowed from ancient and Renaissance Italy, English tragedy in its beginning was predominantly indebted to one classical source, the rhetorical drama of imperial Rome. Seneca influenced the British dramatists very much. To the direct influence of Seneca is to be ascribed the composition of the first English tragedy which we possess. *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex* by T. Norton and T. Sackville was first acted on January 18, 1562, by the members of the Inner Temple before Queen Elizabeth. *Gorboduc* adheres to

the usage of classical tragedy, but the authors show no respect for the unities of time or place and they introduce before each Act the non-classical device of a dumb show. What gives the play its chief importance is the use, for the first time in English drama, of blank verse. The model of *Gorboduc* was followed at Gray's Inn in 1566, when Gascoigne produced with the aid of two associates *Jocasta* which soon came to be called tragi-comedy. In addition, the Universities provided a field for neo-Senecan tragedy and tragi-comedy, both in Latin and English.

In this period many plays based on English History were also produced. Some of the notable plays are *Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* and so on.

The Elizabethan Drama

In 1576 Elizabeth had been on the throne for 17 years, but so far as the stage is concerned, we may consider the erection of the theatre in Shoreditch as making the start of that great dramatic development, which is styled by her name. During the time when the professional actors were establishing their position, the Queen herself and members of her court had displayed a real, if somewhat erratic, interest in theatrical affairs; companies under such titles as the Queen's Men, Lord Sussex's Men, Lord Essex's Men were formed and given liberty to move from place to place.

Shakespeare's Immediate Forerunners

When we pass beyond the year 1576 we have an impression of accelerated time. During the period 1576-88 John Lyly introduced a fresh kind of comedy to the English stage. *Alexander*, *Compaspe Diogenes and Sapho* and *Phao* appeared in 1584, *Galathea* about 1580, *Endimion* in 1588 and these were followed by others of similar qualities—*Midas* (1589), *Mother Bombie* (1590), *Love's Metamorphosis* (1590) and *The Woman in the Moon* (1592).

It was Lyly who was largely responsible for the first refined elaboration of romantic sentiment. As a university man, he was well acquainted with the classical playwrights, and his comedies show that his imagination was continually stirred by memories of ancient Greek myth. All his characters are viewed through an idealistic coloured glass. He limits his dramatic themes to the exploitation of romantic love. In his novel called *Euphues* published in 1578, Lyly had explored a new and highly artificial prose-style; style which rapidly became so popular in courtly speech and in the writings of other authors that it has won notoriety under the title "euphuistic". All men and women of culture started to converse in euphuistic style. This style, Lyly has used for the dialogue of his plays.

Thomas Kyd, the author of *Spanish Tragedy* had the born playwright's instinct for effective situations. Marlowe's earliest play, *Tamburlaine the Great* captured the theatrical public by its high astounding terms. In *Doctor Faustus* the passions for infinite knowledge, and in *The Jew of Malta* the passion for infinite wealth, are the leading motives. In *Edward II*, the colours are quieter but there is an advance in dramatic technique and the closing scenes are marked by truly tragic pity and terror. Compared with *Edward II* Peele's chronicle of *Edward I* still stands on the level of the species to which its title and character alike assign it. His finest play is *David and Bethsabe.* Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* seems to breathe something of the air which blows over in English countryside. Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, Henry Chettle and Anthony Munday, who wrote the original text of the composite play *Sir Thomas More* and other works, are among the other important writers of the early Elizabethan drama.

This period of the English drama could not be one of full consummation. In tragedy the advance which had been made in the choice of great themes, in knitting closer the connection between the theatre and the national history, in vindicating to passion its right to adequate expression, was already enormous. In comedy the advance had been less decisive and less independent, much had been gained in reaching greater freedom of form and something in enlarging the range of subjects ; but artificiality had proved a snare in one direction, and the licence of the comic stage in another.

Shakespeare

These were the circumstances under which the greatest of dramatists began to devote his genius to the theatre. The great and irresistible demand on the part of Shakespeare's public was, for incident, a demand which of itself necessitated a method of construction, different from that of the Greek drama. Hence in part arises the circumstances that Shakespeare so constantly combined two actions in the course of a single play, not merely supplementing the one by means of the other, as a bye or under plot. And where he thus led, many have followed. It is in characterization, in the drawing of characters ranging through almost every type of humanity, which furnishes a fit subject for the tragic or the comic art, that he remains unapproached ; and it was in this direction that he pointed the way which the English drama could not henceforth desert without becoming untrue to itself.

The Jacobean and Caroline Drama

The prevailing atmosphere in the play-house from 1587 on to about 1598 was romantic, but already within that decade signs of

a movement towards realism were not wanting. *Arden of Feversham* carried tragedy into a middle class milieu, and its counterpart in comedy is to be found in Henry Porter's *Two Angry Women of Abington* (1598), in which we are shown a couple of bourgeois families involved in strife and blundering their way through the confusion of a night's darkness. In neither of these, however, was the realistic method purposeful.

Ben Jonson

In the development of the new form of comedy, one man, Ben Jonson, stands out pre-eminent. He wrote several plays, *Every Man in His Humour*, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, *Poetaster*, *Volpone*, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. Through these, Jonson became one of the most talked-about dramatists of the time. The publication of his works in 1616, was a testimony to the position he had won for himself.

By no means all of Jonson's plays are realistic in form. They are all, however, animated by one spirit. He was opposed to romantic comedy, and historical chronicles. The word "humour", appears in the title of his first play, and familiarly his form of comedy is now called "the comedy of humours". In effect, therefore, Jonson endeavours for the purpose of presenting his satirical picture of society, to put upon the stage, not individuals but types—the old father, the miser, the boasting soldier, the jealous husband. His dialogue has sting and wit.

Shakespeare's Contemporaries

Other dramatists, however, eagerly took up his style, adapting it to their own purposes. Already in 1597 the classically minded friend of Jonson, George Chapman, had penned a comedy with the significant title of *A Humorous Day's Mirth*, in which he showed a similar approach towards character drawing. *The Gentleman Usher*, *Monsieur D'Olive*, *The Widow's Tears*, *Estward Ho* are some of the other plays of Chapman. Chapman was Jonson's friend and Thomas Dekker, one of the freshest and liveliest theatrical writers of the time, was his enemy. Among his earliest works, was *The Untrusting of the Humorous Poet*. Dekker's true gift, however, lay not in the satire but in the exploitation of realistic comedy with a kind of warmth and affection. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* showed this at the start of his career, and it is equally evident in the sentimentally conceived portrait of *The Roaring Girl*; *or*, *Moll Cutpurse* more than a decade later.

Like Chapman, Middleton started with plays placed in romantic settings—*The Old Law* (1599), *Blurt Master Constable* (1601) and the *Phoenix* (1603), but his real virtues were exhibited only when he adopted the realistic style in *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605) and *A Mad World, My Masters* (1606).

The most interesting and exciting thing about this period is the fact that the new mood which encouraged satire and realistic-sentimental scenes also had the power to stimulate ; what we now recognize was the greatest development of tragedy since the time of ancient Athenians. All the playwrights mentioned above tried their hand, and tried successfully, on tragedy. Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, or, *A Revenge for a Father*, became quite popular.

A vastly different purpose animates the plays of John Webster, whose *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* are among the few non-Shakespearean tragedies, which preserve their fame till this day. Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness* and *The Maid's Tragedy* of Beaumont and Fletcher, are also worth of fame.

Restoration Drama

The theatres were officially closed by Commonwealth Ordinance in 1642. The Puritan authorities were anxious to put a stop to all sorts of amusements, innocent and otherwise. But actors and spectators, evaded the vigilance of the soldiers, and presented their shows in defiance of authority.

In 1660 Charles II returned to his throne. He removed all the restrictions imposed on Drama. A new species of tragedy called heroic tragedy, commended itself by its novel choice of themes. In conjunction with his brother-in-law, Sir Howard and afterwards Dryden threw the vigour and brilliancy of their genius into the scale. At first, in his *Essay* on *Dramatic Poesy*, he claimed for English tragedy the right to combine her native inheritance of freedom with valuable foreign acquisitions. Among the other tragic poets of this period, N. Lee. in the outward form of his dramas, accommodated his practice to that of Dryden. T. Otway, the most gifted tragic poet of the younger generation, contemporary with Dryden, inherited something of the spirit of the Elizabethan drama. Among dramatists, who contributed to the vogue of heroic play, may be mentioned J. Banks, J. Weston, C. Hopkins, E. Cooke, R. Gould, T. Rymer and Elkanah Settle.

English comedy in this period, exhibits the influence of Jonson and Fletcher. This is especially true of the comedies of Dryden from *The Wild Gallant to The Spanish Friar* ; Comedy of Manners is the most typical product of the Restoration stage. Sedley's *Mulberry Garden*, Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers* are abounding with wit and humour. Wycherley, Sir George Etherege, Congreve are some of the famous dramatists of this period, who successfully wrote comedies of manners. Writers like Colley Cibber brought out sentimental comedies.

Drama in the Eighteenth Century

In the realm of tragedy, the eighteenth century inherited three or four traditions—that which may be styled heroic, that which led towards renewed appreciation of Shakespeare, the pathetic style (often in the form of English historical plays) as expressed by Banks and Otway, and the gradual development of pseudo-classical theory and practice. But this is a slack period so far as English tragedy is concerned. No high creative talent arose to revive the poetic genius of English tragedy. In one form the English Opera was preserved as a pleasing species of the popular drama. On the whole eighteenth century did not do anything special in the field of drama.

Nineteenth Century Drama

With the beginning of the nineteenth century, came a decline of dramatic composition of the higher class. Joana Baillie's well meant, but anaemic attempts to rejuvenate in her plays the poetic passions of tragedy and comedy, were based on a misleading theory.

The distance of the stage from the pit and galleries rendered subtle acting impossible, and forced the performers to indulge in shouting, if their words were to carry to the topmost galleries. Hence the rise and popularity of "Spectacular Play". Melodrama became the prime form. Debauchery, fashionable vice, evils of all kinds centered in these houses of amusement.

During the period of Queen Victoria, theatres were given a new shape. Elaborated scenic effects were produced through light and other artificial arrangements. From 1790 to the time when Robertson brought forth something which seemed to betoken the awakening of the new age, three styles of tragic drama appeared—the classic, the domestic, and the pseudo romantic. Neither the classic nor the domestic tragedy succeeded, because the poets preferred to soar to realms more fantastically conceived.

Wordsworth's group of romantic poets, all tried their hands at play-writing. Robert Southey's *Wat Tyler* and Coleridge's *Remorse* show the influence of German romantic drama. Some of the other plays of this period are, Sir Walter Scott's *The House of Aspen*, Charles Lamb's *John Woodvil*, Shelley's *The Cenci*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, Keats's *Otho the Great*, and Byron's *Cain*.

4

Twentieth Century English Drama —Its Salient Features

A Historical Survey

During the opening decades of the century, social drama takes first place. In 1906 appeared *Silver Box* and with this play John Galsworthy immediately established himself as a dramatic force. For his motto the author has taken the old adage : "One view for the rich and for the poor." The first experiment of Galsworthy was followed by many others in which the same general objective was exemplified.

Galsworthy

For his dramatic task, Galsworthy possessed certain sterling qualities. He had a profoundly humanitarian outlook on life, and he strove to the best of his ability to adopt an objective attitude ; he was slow to condemn individuals and preferred to balance vice and virtue ; in general, he was not sentimental in his approach and only rarely did he rely upon pathos for the effect of his scenes ; he had an excellent sense of dramatic architecture, and although his emphasis did not rest upon individuals, he had the power to give a living quality to the persons with whom he dealt. Basically, he was intent upon forging domestic or social "tragedies".

Granville-Barker and Masefield

Harley Granville-Barker began somewhat earlier than Galsworthy. In each of his plays social problem has been taken for the theme. Where Galsworthy's mind is intent mainly upon the problem itself, Granville-Barker always displays an interest in the inner life of his persons.

Masefield was a poet, yet the power of the *New School* was sufficiently strong to persuade him to abandon verse and deal with "ordinary" characters. His two works, *Tragedy of Nan* (1909) and the later *Melloney Holtspur* (1923) merit attention.

Many other playwrights of these years pursued the various styles, established by their masters, such as, Pinero's pathos, Jones's broader problems, Galsworthy's social forces, Granville-Barker's inner sentiments, Masefield's tragic search, all of these may be seen reflected in the plays of their contemporaries and immediate successors.

Synge, Yeats, etc.

When we consider these and other twentieth century dramatists in relation to such realistic peasant drama as was called to birth by the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899, and the setting up of the Abbey Theatre in 190 , we find that the dramas written by them are quite impressive. Certainly this Dublin stage, under the leadership of W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, and Lady Gregory, found its most characteristic expression in plays which, although rooted in the Irish soil, were irradiated by an imaginative approach. Synge's realistic tragedy, *Riders to the Sea* is an excellent piece of art.

Shaw

Play after play was presented during the twenties and thirties, many of them winning temporary esteem but few with the power to hold attention. No one can deny that the dramatist who stands to a kind of angular and erratically poised colossus over the whole theatre world, from the last years of nineteenth century on to the later half of the twentieth century, is George Bernard Shaw. Shaw started as an exponent of realism and a determined inculcator of the play of ideas. *Widower's Houses* in 189z was an attack directed at the evils of the slum ; *Mrs. Warren's Profession* in 189, similarly was aimed to expose the evils of prostitution. He was concerned with using the stage as a platform for social propaganda.

Other Playwrights and Their Dramatic Traits

The close neighbour and friend of Shaw, Sir James Barrie was utterly different in temperament, in outlook upon life, and in creative style. Another important playwright of this period is A. A. Milne. In the plays of these three playwrights, there exists a theatrical environment. Within this period, however, one interesting movement was that towards the re-establishment of the comedy of manners. Wilde had given a lead in the composition of polished, spritely dialogues ; Jones had experimented with the form of the comedy of manners in *The Liars* and Shaw had brought his own individual style to the enrichment of the comic. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News* (1904), aided in the later growth of comedy. Among the playwrights who thus applied themselves to the writing of comedy, Somerset Maugham first attracts our attention. After 1920, there has been a swarm of playwrights, writing plays on various themes.

T. S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot's plays formed an important milestone in the long slow journey towards the resuscitation of the poetic drama ; here is the poet who was regarded by many of the younger generation as their master turned to the stage and sought to apply his characteristic style to its purposes. His *Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and the *Elder Statesman*, can be cited in this respect. W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood also followed this style.

1945 and Onwards

In seeking to look at the dramatic activities of the year 1945 onwards, two things seem to emerge. First, that despite the Second World War, there was essentially no chasm between the post-war and pre-war drama. Drama continued to be written as usual, in spite of the black-outs and bombings. Subject-matter may be different, but not the style. Second, a kind of modern drawing-room drama emerged. The ordinary realistic play usually concentrating upon domestic issues, continued to be popular. Agatha Christie gave it a new twist in her numerous detective pieces, channelling into a fresh stream the combination of the ordinary and the romantic.

The special character of the year 1955-61 has been provided by the sudden upsurge of a new realism. Just as in various dramas, depiction of low-middle class life aroused excitement between 1900 and 1915, so a similar excitement has been evoked in at least certain quarters by the 'Kitchensink' school of recent years. New dramatists are exploiting themes, situations and characters, which already had been freely put on the stage in the earlier years.

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* startled the public in 1956 by its retreatment of the old theme, concerning the well brought up girl, who marries a man out of her social milieu ; here was a fresh orientation and vehicle in which the author's vituperative abilities were offered full scope. The plays of Osborne's set the pace. They made their impact in the theatre by their abusive wrath and self-centredness as well as by their shock tactics. Historical Plays, of course, were, at this time, being written—plays such as *Osborne's Luthur* and Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons.*

Salient Characteristics

If we search for one single epithet to apply to the modern stage, we are forced in the end to select the objective "eclectic". No era offers such a motley array of complex and confusing trends.

The stage of this period was deeply coloured by the historical events, and by the scientific trends, which have so markedly

disrupted and altered our lives. Two World Wars left their impression on the theatres. The drama of this period can be divided into *Commercial* and *Non-commercial.*

Firstly, in this period developed the prose realistic play, sometimes dealing with the personal relationships of the characters, and sometimes dealing with the wider social forces, often with particular stress upon ideas. In short, so-called *realism* became a relative term in the theatre.

Secondly, the dramatists have been making efforts to construct plays according to different patterns. "The fantastic, the symbolic, the poetic, all have co-existed alongside the *naturalistic* and the *realistic*", and the poetic plays, written during the fifty years, have been quite a success

Thirdly, the majority of the theatrical works, written in the past, were specifically designated according to the "Kinds" (such as comedy, tragedy, history, tragi-comedy and so on) to which they belonged ; the majority of twentieth century dramas are called nothing but "plays", occasionally mingling together the laughable and the serious. Comedies and farces, of course, have abounded during these years, but tragedy has virtually vanished.

Fourthly, the playwrights of this period have cultivated two areas of themes—those of social and sexual revolt. The world "modern" was being freely talked about in the earlier years of the century and that has been caught up in today's trite use of the word "contemporary" ; numerous play-titles, such as *The New Morality, The New Sin, The Younger Generation, The Young Idea*—tell their own story. This trend has led towards two things. First, in circles there are signs that dramatic worth is being regarded as of less importance than the social-attitude adopted by a particular author, and, in addition, there is an inclination to speak of plays, not in terms of good or bad, but in terms of "modern" and "old". Second, the revolt against Victorian conventions, against parental authority, against romantic love, against all sorts of conditions, has led towards the employment of "shock tactics". Gradually this shock tactics became so common, that it ceased to have its intended effect—rather became a cause of boredom. A few decades ago, Shaw was startling his public by introducing the word "bloody" in his dialogue.

Fifthly, the interest of the public in the theatres gradually declined. Just before 1914 the silent pictures were beginning to attract the public away from the stage, during thirties the sound-films came into their own, and within the past ten or fifteen years television has swept over the world. So much so, sometimes the audience in a theatre was too small to cover the cost. Besides the element of revolt within the drama, has also been responsible for this decline. The method of direct preaching, instead of amusement, created a deep gap between the audience and the theatre, and eventually the audiences declined.

Sixthly, the new dramatists looked at life with a scientific approach. People like Freud gave a new meaning to love, and the twentieth century playwrights no longer believed in "romantic love" like their forefathers. Bernard Shaw called it Life Force.

Seventhly, the playwrights took to didacticism and started preaching their ideologies (of course indirectly). The desire for liberty in domestic and in moral circles was paralleled by the desire for liberty in social life. Suddenly, the playwrights became aware of the depressing circumstances in which the poor are fated to dwell ; they viewed the squalor and the misery of the cities ; they looked around and saw the terror of modern civilization. The class-war, which has found its expression in actual life, was freely dealt with by the newer school cynically, yet profoundly, by men such as Bernard Shaw, seriously by men such as Mr. Galsworthy.

Eighthly, being a drama of ideas, the modern theatre tended to become more static. Modern drama aims at disclosing the secrets of the human heart, which interfere very much with the action of the play. Action is not as important as idea. Inner conflict is the substitute for outer conflict. The psychologists have made the modern dramatists conscious of human soul and the typical inner world. The study of human behaviour vis-a-vis society is the paramount concern of today's drama.

Ninthly, twentieth century dramatists have taken recourse to symbolism where direct enunciation was impossible. This symbolism in itself aided in raising the dark and even sordid themes, chosen by the dramatists, to artistic levels, they otherwise could not have reached. The white horses in *Rosemersholm*, the roaring waters in Mr. Masefield's *Nan*, the waves dashing in ceaseless fury throughout Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, all gave unity and universality to the various tragedies in which they appear.

Finally, some of our living dramatists make their protagonists not men, but unseen forces—social, religious, political or natural. In *Riders to the Sea*, the sea is a dramatic personage. In *A Man for All Seasons*, the Common Man is an individual as well as Society. He is Every Man as well as No Man. Galsworthy and Shaw used many social forces as dramatic personages.

Conclusion

In fact all sorts of experiments are being made in twentieth century drama. Many of the playwrights are reviving Comedy of Manners. In many ways, we seem now to be approaching a new Augustan period, when reason rather than imagination, commonsense rather than romantic nonsense, will dominate life and literature. Oscar Wilde, Henry Arthur Jones, and a number of others aided in the revival of this form of Comedy.

5

Shaw's Philosophy : Creative Evolution
Or
Shaw's Theory of Life Force

Conventional Doctrine of Progress

Shaw's philosophy of Creative Evolution was influenced by two factors : (*a*) his attitude to the conventional idea of progress ; and (*b*) his reaction to Darwin's theory of Natural Selection. Right from the beginning, from his career up to the end, Shaw believed that as time passed by mankind progressed automatically to higher and higher levels of being. The idea that each age is better than the last one and that the mankind is steadily improving is carried through all his earlier works Shaw described the successive stages of human progress in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* that the age of faith gave way to the age of reason, and the age of reason gave way to the age of will. According to him social progress is a fact while retrogression is an illusion. But towards the end of his career his faith in the doctrine of continuous progress of mankind began to falter and by the time he wrote *Man and Superman* he had ceased to have any belief in progress in any ordinary sense of the word. It is believed that this change of attitude on the part of Shaw was due to his reading of Plato. Whatever might be the cause, the change was complete. "I do not know", he says in the Epistle Dedicatory to A. B. Walkey, "whether you have any illusions left on the subject of education, progress and so forth. I have none." In the notes to *Caesar and Cleopatra* he ridiculed the idea of progress occurring continuously from Caesar's time to ours. The doctrine of so-called continuous progress has no support in any branch of learning, whether it is history or politics or human thought.

But as Shaw lost his faith in the conventional doctrine of progress, he developed a faith that real progress means an evolution in the inner qualities of the species. Man, according to him, cannot achieve real progress through education. "Education", he says, "is sham". If real progress means an evolution in the inner qualities of the species, then man can achieve it only if he can procreate a better race. "Our only hope", says Tanner in the Revolutionist's

Handbook, "then, is in evolution. We must replace the man by the superman." This alone is the real progress. Shaw thus eschewed the common belief that progress can be attained in the course of a few years. Eric Bentley has aptly observed : "As his faith in quick progress waned, his faith in slow progress increased, as he became less and less of an optimist over the short period, he became more and more of an optimist over the long period."

His Reaction to Darwinism

Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, greatly influenced the life in the later half of the nineteenth century. Darwinism ran counter to all the religious views of the time. It showed the hollowness of the Biblical theory of creation which contemplated one species as distinct from others and reserved separate days or moments for the creation of each of them and it asserted a genetic relation between all forms of life, including man. After Darwin, human history could no longer be conceived as a divine drama. Man was a part of nature, being organically connected with all other species from which he has been derived by a continuous process of evolution. By placing man wholly within the organic realm, Darwinism undermined people's belief in 'creationism' and raised doubts as to the unique spiritual nature of man. Thus, it shook the entire foundation on which Christianity was based. It clearly indicated that the whole structure of religious and moral christian world was based upon false history. It also affected the conception of the nature of mind itself.

As a result of Darwinism the intelligentsia of the Western World became more and more anti-clerical, anti-religious and materialistic. Since the world was full of evil and suffering, it seemed that either God was impotent or, if omnipotent, cruel and mischievous. Thus, Darwinism ushered in an era of scepticism or, as T. H. Huxley, one of Darwin's greatest disciples called it 'agnosticism'. Darwinism helped to banish God and overthrow the religious and moral edifice of Christian world, but it did not give anything constructive to replace them. The fear of God which had hitherto kept powerful men in check and exercised a restraint on their actions, was now no longer there, and the cunning and the strong could complacently tyrannise over their weaker and harmless contemporaries, and find justification for their conduct and actions in Darwin's doctrine of the Survival of the Fittest. Priests and Bishops took up arms to defend the authority of the Church which had been undermined by the onslaught of Darwinism. They believed that if they accepted the new truth, it would mean to invite a moral collapse for the world. But it was they who produced a moral collapse by not modifying their formulae in the light of the new knowledge. Humanitarians were worried about the future of mankind.

But Shaw had discarded the religion of his forefathers long before, and was working to bring a better world into being. He felt the urgency of a credible and healthy religion based on 'natural scientific history' in place of the supernatural one that had definitely crumbled. He, therefore, put forward his religion of Creative Evolution, of which his biological doctrines form an essential part.

Darwinian Theory of Natural Selection

Malthusian law of population had a great impact on Darwin and he postulated that animals breed in geometric ratio whereas the food-supply increases only in arithmetical ratio. Consequently there is not enough food and shelter for all, and there must be a struggle for existence between : "Either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species or with the physical conditions of life."

Darwin also propounded that a careful examination revealed that the members of a population forming a species do not remain unchangeably the same from generation to generation but vary considerably, and until at last, through a long course of descent, they are converted into new species. It is in this way that the world is peopled by innumerable species, genera and families, although at the beginning there were at most four or five species.

From the two postulates mentioned above Darwin deduced that in the struggle for existence only those individuals survive which possess certain variations or characters which are in any degree profitable to the individuals of a species, in their infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to their physical conditions of life. Others are eliminated in the struggle for existence. This process of preservation, or the survival of the fittest, and elimination of the unfit is known as the Darwinian theory of Natural Selection.

Darwin further postulated that owing to this struggle for existence, individuals of a species vary among themselves, and the variant types that are weaker than their fellows perish, the stronger and more efficient ones, survive and pass their qualities on the next generation. Thus these variations are transmitted to the offspring by heredity, the variations becoming more and more pronounced with the lapse of time until the individuals of a later generation become significantly different from their early ancestors. This principle of Natural Selection or the Survival of the Fittest, according to its author, accounts for the whole spectacle of evolution.

Lamarck's Theory of "Acquired Character"

Lamarck postulated that great changes in environment necessarily result in changes in the needs of animals ; these altered needs induce the animals to make some efforts which result in altered habits and these altered habits produce structural changes from use

and disuse of particular organs. The modifications that arise in the course of the life of an individual in this manner are called an 'acquired character'. The kernel of Lamarck's theory is that acquired characters are inherited and passed on to the next generation. This is the cause of Variation.

Butler's Theory of Biological Evolution

It is here that Samuel Butler came forward and constructed a theoey of biological evolution in four substantial volumes basing his arguments partly on Buffon, Lamarck, and Erasmus Darwin. Against the prevalent mechanistic theories, according to which life is evolved from dead matter and is governed by the same physical and chemical laws as those that govern the behaviour of dead matter, Butler postulated that what is called the inorganic world is up to a certain point living, and is instinct, within certain limits, with consciousness, volition and power of concerted action. The obvious inference is that life is not a by-product of dead matter, but that it existed from the very beginning as an independent force in every atom of matter. All the form of life with which the world is peopled evolved from this force through variations. According to Lamarck and Butler, purpose, will, effort and heredity are the most important factors that operated in the evolution of species.

Shaw's Creative Evolution

Shaw is a believer in the Creative Evolution. The idea of Creative Evolution occurs here and there even in his early writings. But it was in the Dream Interlude in Act III of *Man and Superman* that he first made a conscious and consistent statement about it. This act, together with the preface, the Revolutionist's Handbook and collection of aphorisms, embodies the essence of Shaw's philosophy.

In the beginning of his career, Shaw looked upon happiness as the aim of life But having read widely in the writings of 19th Century biologists and philosophers, he threw the claims of happiness to the winds. Don Juan, who is Shaw's spokesman, has discovered that happiness does not count in life. He is bored with his existence in hell—the home of the unreal and the seekers for happiness. Life, he has found out, is the only reality, and he declares his intention of going to Heaven, the home of the masters of reality. Thus he wants to escape from the vulgar pursuit of happiness : "A perpetual romance, a universal melodrama." In Heaven he would spend his aeons in the service of life. The Devil is contemptuous about these 'Life Worshippers', and he is too cynical to accept aniy eulogy of man "The power that governs the earth", he holds, "is not the power of Life but of Death." Mankind, in his opinion, is doomed. Don Juan sets forth the idea of the Life Force in opposition to the devilish pessimism about man and his future.

Life Force : A Supreme Spirit

Shaw's Life Force is comparable to a Supreme Spirit but is different from a God Almighty. Shaw was brought up in a Christian home, but he soon lost faith in Christianity and renounced God quite early in life. Yet he is a deeply religious man. He does not believe in God in the Christian sense of the term, but he believes that this world is driven by some mysterious power which is immanent in it. Christianity believes in a God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, almighty and infallible. But the evil inherent in the world is sufficient to confuse any sane man as to the validity of these attributes of God. The problem of evil, according to Shaw, is unexplainable under Christianity, because the existence of evil is a clear proof that God is either not almighty or not benevolent. Darwinians solved this problem by postulating a theory of No-God. But faith in a No-God was as demoralising as faith in God almighty was untenable. Shaw turned aside from both the mechanists and the fundamentalists, but he agreed with Voltaire that "if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one", and in his search for a healthy and credible religion not incompatible with the science of biology which dominated people's mind at that time, he discovered power behind evolution, and called it the Life Force.

The Life Force is not an omnipotent and omniscient perfection but is striving to be so. It acts on the principle of trial and error, and creates the problem of evil by its unsuccessful experiments and mistakes. In the way, Shaw found a solution of evil, which was not available in Christianity. There is no hard and fast line between God and Evil. The really good man is as rare as the really bad man. The Life Force is a Creative Power trying to evolve into God. Shaw's God is thus an imperfect and fallible Being trying to become perfect and infallible.

Life Force : The Creative Power

The Life Force, says Don Juan, is the creative power behind the universe. It objectifies itself in all forms of life which are also its creation. Don Juan has no faith in progress in the conventional sense of the term, but he believes that the development of species, discloses intelligence and prospective contrivance. The activities of the Life Force are not without design or purpose. It has a definite purpose, though its ultimate aim is not known. And it is not omnipotent, it can act only through its creations. And as it is not infallible it acts on the principle of trial and error, and its mistakes are what we call Evil. The Life Force has a passion for betterment. Since it is always striving after perfection, it rejects the lower forms of life as soon as it finds a higher one. It is thus that it has brought life, which began with amoeba, up to man. It strives only for creation through which it can realise its purpose. It does not care for morality. From his experiences with women Don Juan has learnt that it is impossible to impose any conditions,

such as honour, virtue, chastity, on the Life Force. Indeed the confusion of marriage with morality has done a lot of harm by obscuring its real purpose, which is to breed the race in such a way that it will reach heights now deemed superhuman. But the time will come, prophesies Don Juan, when this great central purpose will be honoured and accepted, and love, constancy, honour, virtue, chastity, etc., with which now it is associated, will be discarded as frivolities.

The Life Force Opposed to Happiness and Beauty

The Life Force is as callous to happiness and beauty as it is to morality. Don Juan prefers arduous striving in Heaven to eternal happiness in Hell. "Beauty worshipping and happiness hunting", he says, are "not worth a dump as a philosophy of life." If the Life Force cared for beauty, it would not have produced ugly animals like the elephant, the ape and then man after having created the bird with its lovely plumage and melodious songs. To fulfil its inner urge for perfection, the Life Force has created a series of beings one coming after another and this indicates an upward drive of the Life Force ; each species being an improvement on the preceding one.

Woman as the Life Force Incarnate

Shaw looks upon woman as the Life Force incarnate. Woman is the embodiment of the Creative Power behind the universe. She has an irresistible impulse not only to perpetuate the species but to procreate a better one. Far back in the evolutional process woman invented and created man for the sole purpose of her own impregnation, because a double-sexed process of procreation is more economical than a single-sexed process. From her point of view man is nothing more than an instrument to enable her to replenish the earth. To her, man has no utility except as father to her children. She is ordained to be mother and is, therefore, in desperate need of a man who can fertilise her. Hence, it is the woman who takes initiative in sex affairs. Thus man is the pursued and woman the pursuer. Ann is everywoman. She ignores Octavius who adores her, because she knows by instinct that he has a poetic temperament, which is barren. With the help of the same instinct, she marks down Tanner as her possible victim and fit mate to procreate better generation. To achieve this end she uses a variety of tricks setting at naught conventional womanly virtues like modesty and respectability. By hook or crook she must entrap her man. Tanner does try to escape her clutches, but no impediment is strong for her to overcome. Ultimately he surrenders to her purpose which, indeed, is the purpose of the Life Force.

In *Man and Superman* the main theme is the ruthless pursuit of man by a woman, as portrayed in Acts I, II, and IV. Shaw has given woman a high status in the evolutionary process. Her main

function is to create higher beings and preserve them. Biologically woman is primary and man secondary. She is superior to man, whom she created for her own purpose. She needs him, must seduce him, for without her travail the race must perish. She does this neither for her happiness, nor for her amoristic pleasures. Her only aim is to carry out 'Nature's behest'. Looked at from this point of view, Ann chasing Tanner ceases to be the mere heroine of a farcical comedy, for she seeks not sexual pleasure but accomplishment of the purpose of the Life Force, which desires that men and women should cooperate to bring into being better race. By submitting before Ann, Tanner yields before the Life Force. Both Ann and Tanner embrace Shaw's religion, because they dedicate themselves to a purpose which is not their own purpose, but of the whole universe.

Shaw's Religion : Abnegation of Self

This is Shaw's true religion, which demands complete abnegation of self for the purpose of the universe. Tanner yields to this purpose against all his prudence and conscience, and Ann, who is everywoman, is compelled by an irresistible power to captivate a man who can fertilise her. Shaw's religion seems to exclude all ideas of free will. Self-abnegation for the purpose which far transcends any personal purpose, has a nobility of its own. Such a religion can even be a substitute for Christianity for those whose faith in Chrsitianity has been shaken as a result of the impact of Darwinism. But it has no originality. Most of the religions of the world are based on this principle.

Shaw's Philosophic Man

Tanner is a representative of the average man and Don Juan of the philosophic man. The philosopher, says Don Juan, is 'Nature's pilot', and Don Juan is the nearest approach to Shaw's philosophic man. The philosopher is something more than a mere instrument of woman's purpose. Woman is an embodiment of the creativeness of the Life Force while the philosopher symbolises its intellectual consciousness ; woman creates and preserves life while the philosopher gives value to it. The Life Force is served by the philosopher's brain just as it is served by woman's fecundity. Thus the purpose of the man of genius and the purpose of woman are both purposes of the Life Force. Woman perpetuates the species while the man of genius improves its quality by conceiving something better. Woman is responsible for breeding the race and the man of genius tries to raise it to heights now deemed superhuman.

6

The Shavian View of Poverty Or The Shavian Economics

Money as the Symbol of Life

Poverty is considered to be the root cause of all atrocities in the world. This is the subject of contempt. The very notion of poverty today is sordid, particularly when one knows that to "decrease ones denominator" means simply to cut oneself off from life. But to Shaw money is not the root cause of evil, rather it is the "symbol of life". To many the love of money is degrading, but to Shaw the universal desire for money is the best, the most promising feature that the world exhibits today. Money destroys base people, but fortifies noble ones. Beauty, cleanliness, fitness, culture, refinement, leisure—without which all else is nothing—these come by money and money alone.

Shaw believed that the sin did not consist in doing this wrong or that wrong, but in living life ignobly. And it is just not possible to lead a good, comfortable, elevated life in poverty. Those who are well-to-do feel that the virtue is the privilege of the poor. Eliza Doolittle, a poor girl, considers cleanliness itself to be a virtue. Shaw vehemently asserts that the crying need is not for temperance, education and votes, but for more money. The devil to be attacked, according to Shaw, is not sin, but poverty.

Poverty : The Greatest of Our Evils

Much of what Shaw has to say on this subject is to be found in *Major Barbara*. The preface contains some of Shaw's most trenchant writings and makes it clear that his main aim in the play was to show "that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor." This is a doctrine he has preached previously in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Widower's Houses*, but in *Major Barbara* he goes further by actually showing the results of poverty on the stage. The play which has a basically

respectful attitude towards the social work being done by the Salvation Army, turns sour in its implicit condemnation of a society that organises itself in such a way as to make such work necessary. According to Andrew Undershaft, the embodiment of virtues is money itself; he does something towards ensuring that others are virtuous. By paying good wages he declares that he saves the souls of his men. He saves them from the seven deadly sins: food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Money speaks, money reigns and money does everything.

Abolition of Poverty : A Panacea For All Social Evils

There is a good amount of truth in the statement that poverty is a crime in as much as we find the poor to be living in a state of open and notorious sin. Shaw says that rich are rich because others are poor, "but it is for the poor to repudiate their poverty".

His panacea for social evils is to abolish poverty. Poverty means lack of money. Give everybody some money according to his basic needs, and the poverty is done away with. Continue giving them regular wages, and you abolish poverty for all times to come. But only those people get money who work. There are certain people who get money without working. This Shaw vehemently rejects. Everybody should earn his living. The only solution of this problem is that every man should be assured a living wage, on the simple ground that he is a man, and has the right to a decent life. No poor and no idle—but no poor first.

State Control

Shaw believes that the world rests solidly on its cash basis, and he proposes, not to remove this basis, but to adjust it. For this Shaw advocates the measure of State Control. What he means by State Control is, for example in the matter of family, that State must be prepared to see that children are brought up properly, but rejects the idea of depriving the parents of the care of their children. The State should see that the parents rear up their children according to certain standards. The State Control advocated by Shaw, in any case, would be an improvement on the insiduous semi-official control which at present masquerades in the guise of charity.

Economic Independence of Women

One great conception of Shaw is the economic independence of women. This term may be variously interpreted. If it means that a woman should have as fair a chance as a man of earning her living, it is in some measure realized already. If it means that a woman, qua woman, should receive financial recognition from the state, it is an extension of the suggestion for the abolition of the poverty. The second is his aim, but his immediate intention is that the first should

be made absolute, so that it may become an acknowledged element in the economic system that it should be a simple matter for a woman to receive a thoroughly comfortable living without resorting either to marriage or to prostitution. For it is in connection with prostitution that Shaw believes that the beneficial results of assuring economic independence to women would most strikingly show themselves.

Public Moral

In the preface to *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw blunts the effect of the "public moral" of the play by quoting as a "fact" Mrs. Warren's apology that "the only way a woman can live decently is to be good to some man who can afford to be good to her." The reference is obviously to marriage and prostitution. But if a woman makes full use of her talents, she can do fairly well in the world. Today many women are earning honest living by their talents.

Shaw also believes that if there is economic independence of women, there would be many unhappy marriages. Such independence is, obviously, a necessary precursor of divorce at will. In fact, he declares that if the law once recognised fertile unions outside marriage, and women became economically independent of man, marriage would quickly disappear. But the fact remains that if there is the economic independence, women would feel more secure and established and would have more respect for the status of marriage bred into their bones for centuries.

7

Shavian Wit and Humour
Or
Shaw as a Comic Genius

Wit and Humour

The distinction between wit and humour becomes all the more important in the plays of Shaw, as he has often been regarded as a mere wit and, therefore, not entitled to a place in the rank of the humorists of the world. Wit is generally connected with the subtleties, incongruities and opposition between words, phrases, fancies and opinions, while humour deals with the eccentricities and abnormalities of sentiments and idiosyncracies of a character. Both wit and humour are related to intellectual judgments, but humour is more related to sentiments while wit is a pure intellectual exercise. Again, there is a tone of seriousness and sobriety in humour which is missing in wit, because wit delights only in the twisted remarks and plays on the words. We find a display of wit in Pope and that of humour in Dickens. In Shakespeare, we find both wit and humour in abundance.

Wit in Shaw's Plays

When we read the plays of Shaw, we get away with an idea that he is a fine talker and nothing more—there is so much of smart wit in his dramas. It seems that Mirabell has walked out of *The Way of the World* straight into *The Philanderer* and assumed the name of Charteris, and that Wycherley's Plaindealer Manly has studied Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche and re-christened himself John Tanner. Shaw's dramas are not merely full of the smart conversation of the fashionable society, they are also replete with judgments on life itself. Marriage, family, established religion, the distribution of wealth, the various profession—all these and many more have come in for severest censure. This censure is, of course, allied to a sense of the ludicrous, which is the stuff of the wit. Therefore, the plays of Shaw belong to domain of wit rather than to the province of humour.

Comedies of Humour

And yet on the deeper study of Shaw's dramas, it will appear that there is as much humour as wit in them. His view of life is, no doubt, intelligent and rational but it is something more also. On a superficial view he seems to be a modern Aristophanes whose business is to degrade the idols and ideals of society. Shaw also makes an attempt at an examination of the fundamental bases of individual and social ideas: the relations of the sexes and the distribution of wealth.

It is in this sense that the majority of his dramas are comedies of humour. The best illustration will be found in the pleasant play, *You Never Can Tell.* The courtship of Valentine and Gloria is a wordy duel like that of Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing.* Both Valentine and Gloria are sincere in their courtship. They are not the victims of any trap.

Humour in "Arms and the Man"

Shaw very often portrays a perfectly self-possessed man confronting persons with conventional culture and some silly romantic notions about happiness and heroism. Thus in the first scene of *Arms and the Man* the natural morality of Captain Bluntschli is set off against the conventional beliefs of Raina. In this scene it is the fugitive Captain, sheltering in a strange house, who ought to look perturbed, and Raina ought to meet him with perfect self-composure. But the tables are turned: it is she who appears to be the intruder, and Captain Bluntschli quietly makes himself master of the situation. The amusing scene seems to be based on the inversion of the usual order of things, and there is no lack of brilliant wit in Captain Bluntschli's talk. But the episode is really a specimen of humour, for it is a masterpiece of character-study, the humour of situation lying in the contradiction between the self-possession of the man who is guided by instinct and the perturbation of the girl who, in a crisis, has nothing but romance and the convention to depend on.

Humour in "You Can Never Tell"

In *You Can Never Tell* there is more than one spring of humour. In the First Act, we have before us three children who have grown up independently of their father. The father is suddenly introduced to them, and we have the tragic comedy of an old man trying to trespass into the domestic life of children who have nothing to do with him. The waiter, William, is a well of mirth undefiled. He is a spectator of the transactions between the father of the family and his wife and children; he understands the follies of both the parties and helps them with his advice and comments which are as remarkable for their simplicity as for their aptness.

Humour in "Pygmalion"

The naive humour of a man who moves independently of convention is best seen in the life of Mr. Alfred Doolittle, father of Eliza in *Pygmalion*. Society makes a pretence that it distributes its wealth among its members as they deserve. Alfred Doolittle, an original moralist, exposes the injustice of conventional standards which pretend to consider what people deserve to earn rather than what they desire to consume. He is one of the undeserving poor and frankly makes his claims on that basis. "I am", he says, "one of the undeserving poor : that is what I am, think of what that means, to a man. It means that he's up against middle-class morality all the time. If there is anything going, and I put in a bit for it, it is always the same story : 'You're undeserving ; so you can't have it.' But my need is as great as the most deserving widow's that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband." Doolittle is in every respect an ordinary man ; it is only his original morality combined with his general incompetence that makes him not only witty in himself but also the cause that wit is in others; and this brings him within the province of humour.

If Alfred Doolittle is frankly non-moral, Louis Dubedat is as openly immoral His creed is the creed of undisturbed enjoyment of life, and he believes in it with the innocence of a child and the conviction of a philosopher. He may be guilty of bigamy and felony, but all his misdeeds are perpetrated with an open-hearted good humour, which even Falstaff might have envied. He is free from the bondage of convention. He has arguments to defend all his actions.

Humour in "The Doctor's Dilemma"

Of all the social institutions which have moved Shaw to laughter, none has given him greater amusement than the medical profession which he looks upon as a vested interest in ill-health. The conference of doctors in *The Doctor's Dilemma* is a pandemonium of monomaniacs.

Doctors deal in disease, and from tinkering at life have lost all sense of its sacredness. The most interesting instance of a medical man's insensibility is, however, to be found in Dr. Paramore, who, on the strength of experiments made on three dogs and one monkey, discovered a fatal disease called Paramore's disease, and passed sentence of death on Craven, who, he thought, was attacked with it. When, however, it is proved by his rivals, on the strength of more extensive experiments, that such a disease does not exist at all, he is not glad at the immunity of the human body from such fatal ailment, but cries out in agony : "The worst of the news ! Terrible news ! Fatal news ! My disease—the work of my life !...... It was all a mistake ; there was no such disease." When Craven

remonstrates with him, the doctor cuts him short, saying : "It's natural for you to think only of yourself. I don't blame you : all invalids are selfish. Only a scientific man can feel what I feel now."

Prof. Ifor Evans writes about Shaw that, "without humour, the vision of life as he saw it would have led him to the scaffold as a revolutionary." He is right in stressing the importance of humour in Shaw's work. For now that many of the issues about which Shaw wrote no longer exist, it is because of their wit and humour that certain of Shaw's plays continue to hold the stage.

Paradox

Quite often Shaw produced laughter with the help of paradox. It is apparent in his style, and is just as marked in his characterisation. Mrs. Warren, for instance, far from being a monster or a fallen woman with a heart of gold, is engagingly poor ; and the success of *Pygmalion* depends largely on the failure of Doolittle to live up to the conventional image of a dustman.

In his very first play *Widower's Houses*, Shaw showed us a transformation scene when the downtrodden rent collector, Lickcheese, reappeared in the last act splendidly dressed as a successful businessman. Something of the same kind happens in *Pygmalion* when Doolittle appears "resplendently dressed as for a formal wedding." Higgins's joke of recommending the dustman to an American millionaire as "the most original moralist at present in England" has caused him to be left 4,000 pounds a year in the millionaire's will, on conditions that he lectures for the Wannafeller Moral Reform World League as often as they ask him up to six times a year. The idea is, of course, preposterous, but Shaw makes serious use of it, as well as giving us plenty to laugh about in Doolittle's panic-stricken reactions to his unwanted respectability.

Doolittle's way with words is also most telling, as Higgins points out early in the play. We can see it when he tells of "the Skilly of the workhouse and the Char Bydis of the middle class", and we feel comically moved by the cadences of Intimidated : "That's what I am. Broke. Bought up. Happier men than me will call for my dust, and touch me for their tip : and I will look on helpless, and envy them." The paradox of a man of his position being so fluent is matched by the paradox of his mistress and himself being so daunted by middle-class respectability that they marry in St. George's Hanover Square, which, far from bringing them happiness, deflates them. We learn that the prospective bride "never comes to words with anyone now, poor woman ! respectability has broken all the spirit out of her."

Doolittle is the most obviously "comic" character in *Pygmalion*, but it would be a mistake to assume that all the play's laughter is associated with him. A great deal of our amusement is caused by Higgins and his outbursts.

The Anti-English Joke

In *Caesar and Cleopatra* Shaw deliberately goes out of his way to create an anachronistic ancient Briton to act as secretary-companion to Caesar. The portrayal of the character of Britannus was theatrically most effective. Similarly Napoleon's long speech about the English in *The Man of Destiny*, and in de Stogumber's ridiculous attitude in *Saint Joan*, Shaw is in his most impish vein. He realised, as Shakespeare did before him, that the audience is flattered when it is most insulted. We have only to remember the grave-digger's exchange with Hamlet to see the truth of this observation.

Britannus is completely convinced of his own rightness of judgement on every occasion, with theatrically effective, comic results. When he learns that P.olemy and Cleopatra, who are brother and sister, are also king and consort, he is shocked into saying "Caesar : this is not proper", thereby allowing Shaw his dry humour at the expense of the English in Caesar's reply : "Pardon him, Theodotus : he is a barbarian, and thinks that the customs of his tribe and island are the laws of nature."

On another occasion Shaw has a sly dig at Britannus' political opinions, in the following exchange with Cleopatra :

Cleopatra : Is it true that when Caesar caught you on that island, you were painted all over blue?

Britannus : Blue is the colour worn by all Britons of good standing.

8

Shavian Themes

Why Shaw Wrote Plays

"I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters." Through this statement which was made by Shaw before the Parliamentary Committee on the Censorship in 1909, it is clear as to why Shaw wrote plays. He wrote plays because he must do so. As he later on made Fanny O'Dowda say in the prologue to *Fanny's First Play*: "I had to write it or I should have burst. I couldn't help it."

A Propagandist

It was because of his themes that Shaw became a dramatist. He was immoral in the sense that he opposed all the current morals and manners, and he was a heretic because he challenged all the beliefs he wished to transform. In that limited sense he was also a *Propagandist*. What type of man was Shaw, it is not possible to judge from his plays, because he wrote his plays as an artist and not as an atheist, or teetotaller, or vegetarian, or socialist. His socialism meant that the existing social order was not in order. It was cruel, shameful and inefficient. Shaw challenged social ideas and stage conventions, but he was not in favour of anarchy. He criticised censorship because he felt that a dramatist's work should not be subjected to likes and dislikes of another man.

Human Relationships

Shaw's themes are the relations between men and women, husbands and wives, and children; the problems of conscience, character and disposition; the problems of individual and society; and the conception of life as creative energy. Hence he presents the classic themes of drama—the clash within the individual mind, the clash between individual characters, and between the individual

and the customs, manners, religion, and policies of his time. Some of the major themes of the plays of Bernard Shaw are, conscience, love, marriage, parents and children, romance, high politics, religion and creative evolution.

Conscience

In *Widower's Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the theme is conscience—the same as that of *Major Barbara*. In the first play the clash is between Trench's conventionally held principles and the facts of ordinary life ; in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* it is between Vivie's honesty of purpose and her dependence upon her mother's ill-gotten income ; in *Major Barbara* it is caused by Barbara's scruples against accepting what she regards as tainted money for her Salvation Army work. Trench in *Widower's Houses* merely collapses, his problem is solved by his surrender. Vivie does not surrender ; she arrives at a solution of her problem by claiming independence and rejecting the money. Barbara realises that without accepting her millionaire father's money the work of the Salvation Army cannot be carried on, but her conscience cannot reconcile to this situation, and as such she resigns her job, and adopts a new kind of life where such gifts become unnecessary. What more essentially Christian conclusion could any play possess ?

Love

The theme of *The Doctor's Dilemma* is essentially love. The honest and level-headed Sir Colenso is made ridiculous by allowing self-interest to influence him because of his infatuation for the wife. She, however, does not deserve him, being so unintelligent that on her artist husband's death she makes a fool of herself by dressing up – to please the dead man, she says.

Shaw never made adultery or eternal triangle a theme of his plays. His plays and other writings indeed show that he was interested in sexuality in its intellectual and comic aspects. His work never indicates a simple sexual attitude, and there is never anything approaching sensuality. Shaw's lovers never behave conventionally, and as such he never glamorises romantic love. He is so candid in his love scenes that it is supposed by some readers that he was cold hearted, but a detailed examination of these scenes proves that he was a man not only of exceptional insight but of the deepest feelings. He treats love with the respect of one who realises its importance, but without false sentiment or exaggeration. He is concerned above all with conscious love. Apart from Shakespeare, there are no love scenes the equivalent of his in the entire English drama.

In *You Never Can Tell*, Shaw has dealt with love in the most characteristic manner. Valentine, the poor man, has fallen in love with the lovely Gloria at first sight, and has to tell her so, hating himself for his helplessness. Another characteristic love scene is

that between Hypatia and Percival in *Misalliance* with a desperate and excited girl taking the initiative. Tired of good manners, the girl invited the young man, whom she has only just met, to play with her. She makes him realize that he cannot help himself; she will fight like the devil to stop him kissing her, but he must kiss her.

There are in these plays the themes of the relations of husbands and wives, parents and children, and the rapidity with which advanced ideas become out of date—these themes being interwoven within the main theme of love.

In *Arms and the Man*, romantic love has been contrasted with the practical love of a man of sense, and naturally the honour goes to the latter. Shaw shows the prettiness but also the hollowness of romance, topples hero and heroine off their pedestals, and replaces self-deception by the genuine thing.

In a later play, *Heartbreak House*, he shows the attainment of conscious love in a girl who passes through emotional love and the love of convenience to spiritual union. This play offers a number of varieties of love as well as that with which this play ends when the heroine finds her 'spiritual husband and second father'. Love forms the basis of *Pygmalion* also. Love, actually, is available in every play of Shaw in some form or the other.

High Politics

Shaw's main aim, right from the beginning, as a dramatist was to concern himself with the contemporary society; its people, its problems, its conventions, situations and the condition of mankind. Although he was primarily interested in party politics, but his interest went far beyond it into the political relations of people and societies. He touches upon particular political issues only lightly and devotes himself to what he calls 'navigation', the guidance of nation, the choosing of rulers, and to the attainment of consciousness to replace the blind and instinctive process of life. Through his political plays, we get on to a political philosophy. *The Apple Cart* is concerned with the absence of political education, *Too True to be Good* with the uselessness of political institutions without purpose, *On the Rocks* with lack of leadership, *The Millionairess* with how to choose leaders, *Geneva* with the challenge of false leadership, and *Good King Charles's Golden Days* with how to decide upon who are fit to choose leaders. Virtually, the single theme is leadership.

Religion

Shaw agreed with Plato that the mind must be taught "to look straight at reality". Shaw's philosophical ideas were essentially religious, that is to say they were given practical (and dramatic) expression in conscience and individual life.

Androcles and the Lion is a picture of Christians thrown to the lions by the Romans for the sake of their faith and how simple faith saves them. Even in the prologue, however, Shaw never lets us forget that the reason for Androcles and his wife being on the move so that they have to face wild beasts in the forest, is that the followers of the Christian religion are being persecuted by the Romans. From the outset, therefore, the theme of the play is put before us and we are forced to consider why men will undergo deprivation and torture for their beliefs.

In *Saint Joan* Shaw is concerned with the question of Christian belief and its effect upon those who have such a belief. He is primarily interested in showing the differences between Joan's idea of Christianity and that of the Church. The theme of *Saint Joan* is : "It was never 'I say so' ; but 'God says so'."

Creative Evolution

Shaw was not content merely to present problems which could be solved by reforms in social justice. He saw that man himself must wish to change for the better before life could begin to be enjoyable for the vast majority of mankind. Shaw, having read widely in the writings of 19th Century biologists and philosophers, came to the conclusion that the purpose behind Nature could be called Creative Evolution. Briefly, according to Shaw, the aim of Creative Evolution is that Nature is striving for self-awareness and self-knowledge. When this is attained, if it ever can be, Man will be able to live happily without strife or vice.

At least three of Shaw's plays are primarily concerned with exploration of the subject of Creative Evolution. They are *Man and Superman*, *Back to Methuselah* and *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. He called *Man and Superman* 'a comedy and a philosophy'. The entire work is an exposition of the idea of the Life Force, expressed in the comedy in the eternal chase of man by woman to create a better mankind, and more profoundly in the 'Don Juan' episode in Hell. Shaw's Life Force is the creativeness of life in the Bergsonian sense : spiritual energy—moral passion. Shaw called it as the idea of God depending on man to get his work done, which gives human life meaning. In the long preface to *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw says that his natural function as an artist was as "an iconographer of the religion of my time". The similar thing is advocated in *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*.

"Though my trade is that of a playwright, my vocation is that of a prophet", he said in 1932. Since he is a prophet, he is a dramatist of the future. T. S. Eliot said of Shakespeare that his work was 'one play'. It is true also of Shaw. His plays as a whole are one play. "I believe in the life to come !" says Ann in *Man and Superman*. Shaw announced the future that his plays would endure.

9

Shaw on Sex, Marriage and Family Or Shavian Views on Social Relations Involving Sex

Women Characters Superior to Men

Shakespeare presented woman as a goddess—even the few 'bad' women are goddesses gone astray. But Shaw was not certain about the exact nature of woman. Woman has always been a mystery for man. How could Shaw be certain about her ! Nobody can dare go to the court and swear that woman is this or that. The impression of woman left by the plays of Shaw is not, at first blush, inspiring. In his plays woman has to play the less worthy part—there are more great men, there are more unpleasant women than unpleasant men. However, in the later plays Shaw kept an even balance. Eve indeed, dwarfs Adam and Cain in Part I of *Back to Methuselah* ; and in the mystic final scene, while her husband and son complain and despair, she concludes greatly. And Lady Chavender is, perhaps, the best person in *On the Rocks* ; where men apart from Sir Arthur, make a poor showing. On the other hand, Lysistrata in *The Apple Cart* is no match to the King and women in *Heartbreak House* and *Too True* are inferior to men.

Old and New Women

Yet we cannot ignore the fact that supreme figures of the shavian stage are women. Candida, Lilith, Lysistrata, Joan of Arc are some of the realistic portraits of women drawn by Shaw. Shaw's women are already emancipated, but have not always remained charming women. There are exceptions too—such as Candida, Barbara, and Grace Tranfield. We can call them 'advanced' women, because there is a particular type of development in their character. At the other end of the scale we have Julia Craven, who, in spite of her being the member of the Ibsen Club, is no more 'advanced' than an amoeba. Actually Bernard Shaw, in *The Philanderer*, ridicules the cult of the "womanly woman" that has been opposed to the sufferage movement. The unwomanly women

who work for their living and know how to take care of themselves never give any trouble. Julia is an unwomanly woman, whom Shaw does not like.

The Philanderer reflects the change in the orthodoxy of the matter that has come about during the last fifty years. The second of the *Sesame and Lilies* lectures is a glorification of the womanly woman. Woman is man's equal, but she is different. She must guide and inspire man, and for this she must be protected from all dangers and temptations. She must be "wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation" ; wise for "modesty of service of man". She must be given proper education. Now, this was an advanced position for the dear dead Victorian days. And this reflects the difference between the new and the old woman. But Shaw was aware that nice blend of the old and the new could give complete satisfaction. Lady Cicely Waynflete is the "womanly woman"—in so far as "womanly means emotional, romantic, irrational, unidead etc."

Maternal Affection

The leitmotif of all Shaw's work on the theme of woman is her maternal aspect. This dominating note recurs insistently in the earlier plays. The two most important of Shaw's women are Candida and Ann Whitefield : the latter is his typical woman—"Every woman is not Ann", he says, "but Ann is every woman" ; Candida is his ideal woman. Discussing Ann in the preface, Shaw says that "Man's genius is for art in its various forms, woman's for maternity." When Candida is introduced to us, she is described as looking at Marchbanks and Morell "with an amused maternal indulgence which is her characteristic expression", she is "likely, one guesses, to become matronly later on." The two men—her husband and her lover, the former a man of character and the latter a man of intellect—are children before this woman.

Lady Cicely Waynflete says confidently : "All men are children in the nursery." Andrew Undershaft has to remind his wife (her son having turned upon her), "You see, dear, it is only the big men who can be treated as children."

Sex and Love

Love in Shaw is, at least theoretically, devoid of romance. It is neither mysterious nor divine. It does not afford any basis for a worship of woman by man. Hector Melone (*Man and Superman*) says : "We think in America that a woman's moral number is higher than a man's and that the purer nature of a woman lifts a man right out of himself and makes him better than he was" ; a sentiment which Ricky-Ticky-Tavy supports with conviction. But Tanner, speaking for Shaw, comments : "No wonder American women prefer to live in Europe ! It's more comfortable than standing all their lives on an altar to be worshipped." The effort thus to banish romance from love is a desperate understanding.

The theory and its psychological basis are given in the preface to *Man and Superman* : "That the men, to protect themselves against a too aggressive prosecution of the women's business, have set up a feeble romantic convention that the initiative in sex business must always come from the man is true ; but the pretence is so shallow that even in the theatre, that last sanctuary of unreality, it imposes only upon the inexperienced...The whole world is strewn with snares, traps, gins, and pitfalls for the capture of men by women... Woman must marry because the race must perish without her travail : if the risk of death and the certainty of pain, danger, and unutterable discomforts cannot deter her, slavery and swaddled ankles will not ..It is assumed that the woman must wait motionless, until she is moved. Nay, she often does wait motionless. That is how the spider waits for the fly. But the spider spins her web. And if the fly, like my hero, shows a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon her pretence of passiveness, and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever !"

Examples of the thing actually at work in the plays are numerous, but of course, Ann Whitefield is the most complete embodiment of the theory—she is perhaps simply and solely that.

Man and Superman is not merely a comedy but also a drama of sex, because here Shaw does not treat sex as an instinct that is gratified for the purpose of physical pleasure but as an instrument of evolution Don Juan is no longer a libertine; he is now concerned for the future of the race instead of for the freedom of his own instincts.

Mrs. Warren's Profession, though not a sex drama, reveals one aspect of the instinct of sex. It shows that consanguinity, however close, does not count between strangers. Frank Gardner and Vivie Warren are attracted towards each other although they are half-brother and half-sister.

Shaw's second play, *The Philanderer*, is his first play to deal with sex and marriage. "Marriage", according to Shaw, "is an institution which society has overgrown but not modified." But in the play he has failed to give a clear picture of marriage as an outmoded institution with its defective laws.

It will be evident that of the three persons (Leonard Charteris, the Philanderer, Mrs. Grace Tranfield, and Julia Craven) who make 'grotesque sexual compacts' it is only Grace Tranfield, a widow with experience of marriage, who realises how abominable the institution of marriage is. She loves Charteris but will not marry him, because marriage gives man a terrible advantage over woman. A genuine specimen of the New Woman, she is independent and self-reliant. She holds that a woman belongs to her self and to no one else. To her, a man's respect is more important than his love. Charteris is a

trifler but he too realises that so long as society does not face facts, marriage will go on and so long there is marriage there will be philandering.

In *Arms and the Man* there is a collision between romantic illusion and the prosaic reality of the sex. Raina and Sergius are disillusioned by coming in contact with Bluntschli and Louka. *Arms and the Man* is the comedy of youthful romance and disillusion. Sergius, very soon, realises that the higher love is sheer emptiness and a creature of flesh and blood cannot live on it. On the other hand, Louka has shrewd insight into the purely biological nature of sexual attraction. A female of the human species, Louka possesses the art of entrapping the man by fascinating and exasperating him at the same time. 'The apostle of higher love' succumbs to the battery employed against him by Louka and admits before all that love, by which he means the so-called higher love, is a 'hollow sham'. In Louka, Sergius meets face to face a woman with her wiles and her fascination, a woman with the coarseness and charm of common day. But all his meetings with Raina were empty because the woman there lay concealed behind a smoke screen of romantic tittle-tattle.

Shaw attacks romantic love from yet another angle. It is always associated with jealousy and espionage. When Louka tells Sergius that Raina makes love to another man behind his back, he 'shivers as if she had stabbed him'. He goes to the extent of challenging Bluntschli to a duel. Thus it is fact that 'higher love' has no solid foundation.

Although marriage is an institution which society compels individual to accept, there is a pretence that it is not only sacred but also congenial and that man and woman get married only because they like each other. The husband and wife make it a point of public decency to assume that they are devoted to each other not for sexual enjoyment but for love, duty and other nobler things of life. The institution of marriage has thus become associated with things which have no connection with it—duty, purity, virtue, morality, respectability and the like. This is the origin of the romance of married life.

Shaw considered the main purpose of the marriage as the procreation of children. But its subsidiary purposes like agreeable companionship, maintenance of a sweet home etc. have been very much emphasised and thus people's attention has been diverted from the main purpose to those that are subsidiary or accidental.

Shaw is a puritan in his attitude to sex. He does not believe in chronic sentimentality as far as married life is concerned. Nor has he any sympathy with the Epicurean philosophy that pleasure is the highest good. It is this Puritanical attitude to life and sex that has made Shaw an avowed enemy of the institution of marriage. He considers marriage as the most licentious of all institutions.

The right to bear a child is the most sacred of a woman's rights. But there are women who do not want to rear up children because it makes them slave of a man. There are many such women in Shaw's works. Susannah Conolly and Elinor McQuinch in *The Irrational Knot*, and Miss Lesbia Grantham in *Getting Married* are some of such women. In *Major Barbara* Shaw has also shown that marriage has failed to hold Lady Britomart and Andrew Undershaft together. Again marital disharmony is more powerfully illustrated in *You Never Can Tell.*

Divorce

The problem of marriage is discussed threadbare in *Getting Married.* On the eve of the marriage ceremony the bride, Edith, the youngest daughter of Bishop Bridgenorth and the bridegroom, Cecil Sykes refuse to get married, having just had their attention drawn to the terrifying legal aspects of the contract they are about to make In the play there is a full-fledged discussion on marriage. The Bishop, however, gives the final verdict that the solution of all their marriage difficulties may be found in making divorce 'reasonable and decent'. What kind of differences will crop up between the husband and the wife cannot be ascertained before marriage, when, more often than not, there is sufficient similarity to deceive. Easy divorce is, therefore, the only remedy for the ills of marriage. Shaw holds that it is insufferable that two human beings should be forced to remain together even when they have begun to hate each other. To impose a continuation of marriage on such couples would be an act of enslavement. Divorce should be made as easy, as cheap and as private as marriage ; it should be granted at the mere request of either without asking 'why'.

Besides easy divorce, Shaw recommends recognition of an absolute right to sexual experience, recognition of fertile unions outside marriage, legislation of polygamy and polyandry ; he recommends even occasional changes of partners and transient casual adventures out of doors without breaking up the home life. In short, no condition should be attached to sexual relations except in the interests of race welfare. Now, if the law will be relaxed to this extent, very few will like to surrender themselves to the tyranny of marriage. Marriage will. then, automatically come to an end.

Family and Home

His attack on the family and the home follows naturally from his views on marriage. The home, according to him, is an enlarged rabbit hutch, "that school of littleness". "Home life, as we understand it, is no more natural to us than a cage is natural to a Cockatoo." "Home is the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse." "For the sake of the unhappy prisoner of the home", he says in the preface to *Plays Pleasant*, "then, let my plays be printed as well as acted." Shaw declares that families are mostly very anarchic.

In the preface to *Misalliance*, Shaw declares that the assumption that the institution of family by compelling people to spend their childhood with their brothers, sisters and parents, creates a specially warm affection, is equally wrong. In *Misalliance*, he exposes the hollowness of this conception. John Tarleton, his wife, his son Johnny and his daughter Hypatia are bound by indissoluble family ties but their tastes, temperaments and characters are so divergent that they appear to be perfect strangers. Although they are no longer children, they can hardly meet each other without exchanging grimaces or angry words.

The atmosphere of the Tarleton household is vitiated not only by the lack of fraternal affection but also by a still worse parental-filial relation. The assumption that there exists between parents and children a very intimate relationship is wrong. The young and the old cannot see eye to eye with one another. Parents are often considerate and sympathetic because they know that "the children are only themselves over again." But children cannot conceive of their parents as fellow beings and are, therefore, insensitive to their feelings. Tarleton does not know what his son and daughter are doing under his very nose. "All this has been going on under my nose, I suppose. You run after young men : and old men run after you. And I am the last person in the world to hear of it." Reduced to hysterics by the callous audacity and ruthless tongue of his daughter, he is glad to get rid of her at the price demanded. This aspect of the family life is further explained by Shaw in *Fanny's First Play*.

Domestic Ties

The theme of children's revolt against parents is found in many other plays of Shaw. John Tanner's outbursts against mothers is too well-known to be discussed here. That domestic ties are "a snare for the soul" is well illustrated in Fanny's play. In *You Never Can Tell* Mrs. Clandon describes two kinds of family life. One of them is based on a mutual respect, on recognition of the right of every member of the household to independence and privacy in their personal concerns. She then points out another sort of family life in which husbands open their wives' letters, and call on them to account for every farthing of their expenditure and every moment of their time ; in which women do the same to their children ; in which no room is private and no hour sacred ; in which duty, obedience, affection, home, morality and religion are detestable tyrannies, and life is a vulgar round of punishments and lies, coercion and rebellion, jealousy, suspicion, recrimination. Families, according to Shaw, are mostly of the second sort in which individuals are sacrificed to the humbug of an ideal.

Thus it will be evident that the institution of the family is neither natural nor conducive to the welfare of the children or of the parents. Shaw's deeper ground for objection to the institution is that it hinders the evolution of the race.

10

Shaw as a Socialist
Or
Shaw as a Propagandist

Capitalism

Shaw is an ardent social reformer. Frank Harris thinks that without his socialism there would have been no Shaw and no Shavian plays. His ideas on social problems are scattered throughout his plays and other writings.

Marx's *Das Kapital* opened his eyes to the fact that capitalism upsets the social balance in every sphere of life—production and distribution, politics, law, religion. Capitalism, Shaw says in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, is 'a disease' and 'the sins it has let loose and glorified are the seven deadly sins'. He fears that it may wreck our civilization if we are not careful. He has devoted a great part of his life to a propaganda against it and the institutions it has brought into being. Shaw believes that capitalists are actuated by motives of greed and self-aggrandisement and no wonder that capitalism is eating into the vitals of the human race. The courts of law, the church, the school and the press are all corrupted by them. It is the rich who manipulate the largest number of votes and capture seats in Parliament. The laws that are made are contaminated at the very source because they are framed by the rich people. Burglary, forgery, embezzlement, pocket-picking and highway robbery are published with ruthless severity but rich idling is exempt from punishment. In a capitalist society law can be ignored by those who are rich, whereas the poor, who are prevented by their poverty from obtaining proper legal advice and protection, are helpless victims. In *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, Captain Brassbound's mother, an unfortunate woman, cannot get the benefit of law because she cannot afford to employ lawyers who charge fees beyond her capacity. Indeed, in a capitalist society even the conception of justice is wrong.

Under capitalism the prosecution of the poor by the rich is going on not only in the name of law and justice but also in the name of religion. Shaw shows that the conflict between rival

theologies in the Roman Empire in his *Androcles and the Lion* is not a theological problem but economic. Justice that is meted out to the early christians is pure legalised revenge.

Capitalism defeats every form of government except that of corrupt oligarchy. *The Apple Cart* is a devastating exposure of the way in which both democracy and royalty are rendered ineffective in capitalistic economy.

The deadliest of all the institutions capitalism has brought into being is the institution of war. Shaw loathes war, because he believes it to be a disaster to mankind.

Slum-Landlordism

At the root of all evils is private property which is the basis of capitalism. It is one of the merits of Shaw that he does not attack capitalism by exposing individual profiteers. The municipalities are prevented from discharging their duties by capitalists whose representatives form the most powerful clique in all civic bodies. Mr. Sartorius, in *Widower's Houses*, is a vestryman and that is why, as the Sanitary Inspector says, he can 'break the law so scandalous'. The poor Sanitary Inspector is as helpless in the grip of men like Sartorius as Lysistrata in *The Apple Cart* is in the grip of Breakages Ltd.

In *Widower's Houses*, Shaw has also raised the problem of slum-landlordism, which is once again, connected with capitalism.

Prostitution

Shaw's third play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is on a social subject of great force. The reaction to this play both in England and America was tremendous. Its performance was banned in England, and in America police aid was called. Shaw was branded by implication as an unscrupulous and blackguardly author. Critics of all kinds were indignant with him. *The New York Herald* declared that the play was grossly immoral.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is a faithful presentment of the economic causes of prostitution. Here Shaw has thrown overboard the common assumption that prostitution is caused by female depravity and male licentiousness. He argues in the preface that prostitution is no more created by the wickedness of Mrs. Warren than drunkenness is created by the wickedness of the publican. He has gone deep into this social problem and has found that the institution in question is an economic phenomenon produced by the under-payment and ill-treatment of women in the industrial world. "Prostitution", says he, "is not a vocation but a slavery to which women are driven by the miseries of honest poverty. When every woman has an honourable and comfortable livelihood

open to her on reasonable terms the streets will make no more recruits."

Medical Profession

In the preface to *The Doctor's Dilemma* Shaw discusses every aspect of medicine through socialism. The medical profession, he argues, has been corrupted at the root by pecuniary interest. Private practitioners are to depend on diseases for their livelihood and most of the private practitioners are poor. We all know that doctors are leaders of humanitarian social workers, and although we pay them fees, we have a belief that the doctors who look to their fees are false to their profession. Shaw says that the doctors have a vested interest in anti-social activities. A poor doctor, declares Shaw, is more dangerous than a poor employer-landlord, because he has to perform unnecessary operations and invent and prolong lucrative illnesses. Most of them have no honour and no conscience.

Shaw attacks medical science, medical profession and individual doctors in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Dr. Ridgeon's new discovery of the opsonin serum for tuberculosis, bravely misapplied by Sir Bloomfield Bonington, has caused a wonder cure. As a result Dr. Ridgeon has been made a Knight. A number of eminent doctors and surgeons have come to congratulate him on his newly won distinction and there is a discussion on professional topics. It is evident from this discussion that the eminent doctors are really ignorant quacks, each with his own mania. "The rank and file of the doctors", Shaw says in the preface, "are no more scientific than their tailors." Shaw regards medical science as 'a branch of witchcraft'. As the eminent Sir Patric Cullen exclaims : "We're not a profession : we are a conspiracy."

When Louis Dubedat is at the point of death, the doctors go on wrangling about science. The callousness of the doctors to human life is shocking indeed. We find the same callousness in Dr. Paramore of *The Philanderer*. Dr. Paramore's disease is worth serious consideration. Dr. Paramore has discovered a new disease which he proudly calls after his own name. He is delighted to find people suffering from it and when foreign investigators disprove the existence of his disease, he instead of being glad at humanity's freedom from such a dreadful disease, is cast down and cries in despair : "The worst of news ! Terrible news ! Fatal news ! My disease—." As Charteris says : "The scientific conscience is the very devil."

Shaw holds capitalistic civilisation responsible for disease, illnesses and premature death. Diseases are caused by overcrowded slums, bad sanitation, malnutrition, overwork and idleness. What the poor need is not medicine, but more leisure, better food, and better ventilated houses ; what the rich need is useful occupation rather than constant running after cure-mongers.

Poverty

Shaw's hatred of poverty, the foundation of which was laid down when as a child he was taken to the slums by his nursemaid, culminated in *Major Barbara*. Poverty, according to him, is not a natural thing; many are poor because a few are rich. He does not believe it is possible to live an elevated and worthy life in a state of poverty. Andrew Undershaft, one of Shaw's philosophers, thunders his doctrine that poverty is the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes. The souls of the poor, he says, are damned, because "the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted", the millstones of the seven deadly sins--food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children.

Money, according to Shaw, is the most important thing in the world. Money speaks, money reigns and money does everything. Therefore, the crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper bread, but simply for enough money. Andrew Undershaft says: "I am a millionaire. That is my religion." But Undershaft's Barbara is an enthusiast for the salvation of souls. There is a conflict between the beliefs of the father and the daughter. Through this conflict Shaw wants to point out how absurd it is to preach religion among poverty-stricken people.

Shaw's Socialism

Shaw's panacea for all these evils is 'Socialism'. By 'Socialism' Shaw means unconditional equality of income for everyone without regard to character, talent, age or sex. The cabin boy must be given "at least as much as the captain unless you definitely wish him to be a lower creature, in which case the sooner you are hanged as an abortionist the better."

Shaw's 'Socialism', it will be evident, is primarily concerned with distribution. From the beginning of his career he advocated equality of income as the basic principle of 'Socialism', and it is the starting point of the *Intelligent Woman's Guide*. "Socialism", he says, "is an opinion as to how the income of the country should be distributed."

11

Shavian Morals and Morality
Or
Shaw as an Iconoclast

Immorality

Shaw does not necessarily want to overturn or change the established conventions and traditions, but he essentially wants men to think for themselves. He wants to secure freedom for them to enable them to think and speak for themselves. So morality, for him, is a word which is synonymous with convention. Immorality then becomes, by definition, not a form of sin, but a mode of freedom : "Whatever is contrary to established manners or customs is immoral." The definition, once accepted, permits breaches of the established code.

Conscience

Shaw considered conscience to be something untrustworthy. Shaw considered it to be "a luxury", which is to be indulged in only when the vital needs of life have been abundantly satisfied. Shaw sees conscience as no God-given touchstone. Duty again, leads not only to infinite pain being inflicted in its name, but to a wholesale dwarfing of the natures of those people who make it one of their gods.

Anti-Puritan

But a special variety of Shaw's constant protest against that which is authorised and blessed is onslaught on Puritanism. Shaw's anti-Puritan tendencies are embodied in Dick Dudgeon of *The Devil's Disciple*. Brought up in a Puritan home where the only element of Puritanism is its joylessness, he mistakes this joyless hate for religion and the service of God. Rightly determining to go to the opposite pole, he declares for freedom, humour, pity, joy ; and wrongly calls this "devil-worship". It is Mrs. Dudgeon and her family who are devil-worshippers. Dick says : "This house is the Devil's house, and no child shall cry in it." On the other hand, when he says to Judith Anderson : "I'm sorry to see by your

expression that you are a good woman." It is obvious that he means "one who is accustomed to act according to certain fixed notions of what is right and what is wrong." When Dick is not talking nonsense about the Devil, there is no act or word of his that is not that of a good man. Whatever the case may be he is at war with the perverted morality.

Idealism

Idealism also falls a prey to the commercialized frivolity of the spirit of the modern age. Shaw himself, in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, recognizes two meanings to the word 'idealist' : the man who masks facts to make them look pleasant ; and the man who strives to realize future possibilities. He separates the two, and calls the first man an idealist and the second a realist. *Arms and the Man* is of little didactic value, but it plays havoc ruthlessly among the idealists. Just as the heroic soldier is dumb before the professional military expert, so the bubble of the "higher love", as proclaimed by Sergius and Raina, is pricked by the real thing, introduced by those masters of reality, Bluntschli and Louka. *John Bull's Other Island*, again, seeks to shatter the false vision of a glorified and underestimated Ireland, and to set up the uncompromising real one in its place. Shaw's Caesar, too, whether historical or not, is perhaps more amazingly human than even Shakespeare's. Shakespeare gave Caesar humanity at the expense of greatness. Shaw's Roman is indeed no longer a god, but still a very great man. In a word, real greatness has been substituted for romantic.

Liberty

All this has been done by Shaw in the name of liberty, liberty of thought, of outlook, of will. Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it. Shaw says · "People need training in freedom as well as in everything else." It is not necessary to go for a contrast to Caesar and Stephen Undershaft; it can be found excellently presented in two men of closer juxtaposition and more equal calibre—John Tarleton, and Lord Summerhays. Tarleton like Morell claims to be an advanced thinker. Summerhays has lot of culture and experience in him.

A disciplined liberty, then, is Shaw's demand ; training in the expert use of our native faculty of freedom, and education in the knowledge which alone can make the exercise of freedom a safe thing. Shaw would make that freedom compulsory which is blended with knowledge and training. But with freedom is also connected the question of toleration. Shaw says : "Toleration, Liberty of Conscience, Freedom of Speech and of the Press are all dogmas... they are against all reason."

Shaw's Glorification of Youth

Finally, it would be worthwhile to discuss here Shaw's glorification of youth. It is not merely that his young men are concrete symbols of revolt and progress, as against the inherent

toryism of age : they are his standard of sanity, of truth, of highest wisdom. It would be a simple matter to demonstrate the fact that his array of *dramatis personae* may be divided into two main groups—a crowd of cool, steady-visioned, emancipated young men and maidens, balanced by an equal crowd of hot-headed, hidebound, half-witted old and middle-aged people ; with two much smaller groups of young blockheads like Johny Tarleton, and of wise old fellows like Caesar and Lord Summerhays.

From the first of the two main groups shine out four striking figures—John Tanner, Marchbanks, the twins in *You Never Can Tell*, and Frank Gardner in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Tanner and Marchbanks stand most completely for Shaw. Both have a profound insight into reality, free from prejudice, masters of life, and both are young.

Post-War Youth

In the period immediately following the war, the young people began to put forward claims for themselves similar to those that Shaw had made for them. Their attitude changed. They believed that it had been the elder generation that had brought about the war in which so many young died. So their claim to have voice in affairs was widely recognised. But Shaw, whether on account of the extravagance and irresponsibility with which the claims of youth were being heard, or because he was entering his seventh decade, now withdrew his support. Among all the characters of the later plays, except a few, keeps the old tradition. We hear Tanner saying : "I stand midway between youth and age like a man who has lost his train : too late for the last and too early for the next." The genuinely young people of *On the Rocks* and *The Simpleton* are irresponsible to the point of imbecility In the other plays, wisdom lies with King Magnus, who is forty-five. It is not uncharacteristic of Shaw that having taught youth to speak for itself, he now left it to do so.

Sinjon Hotchkiss, in *Getting Married*, is a man who has long ago flung aside the leading strings of convention. He loathes the whole marriage morality of the middle classes. He despises all this domestic-purity business, and regards it as "narrow, selfish, wife-grabbing vulgarity." Nevertheless, as a man of honour, he knows that when once a woman has crossed the threshold of her husband's house and broken bread with him, the marriage bond will bind him like steel. "To disbelieve in marriage is easy ; to love a married woman is easy ; but to betray a comrade, to be disloyal to a host, to break the covenant of bread and salt, is impossible." Thus we can sum up Shaw's attitude that the ethics of immorality, though meant to carry us through a period of transition, should, till the period is past and the world set free, take its place among accepted systems.

12

Shaw as a Satirist

Satire Defined

'Satire' is the employment of sarcasm, irony or keenness of wit in ridiculing prevailing vices, abuses, follies of any kind in an individual or social group. Irony is saying one thing when one really means just the opposite. Sarcasm is saying exactly what we mean by saying it cunningly *i.e.*, in such a manner as to excite ridicule or contempt.

By 'Satire' we also understand a specific form of composition in verse or prose designed to ridicule a particular person or class or group of persons. But, as satire is understood now it is not so much the form as the spirit which is the dominant note in literature today as ever before. The satiric spirit may appear in prose as well as in verse in manifold forms. 'Satire' is thus best defined by Garnett : "It is the expression, in adequate terms, of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly provided that humour is directly recognizable and that the utterance is invested with literary form." But in certain cases the castigator of vice may satirize without any humorous intention whatsoever.

The Essentials of Satire

Thus the main characteristics of 'Satire' are :

(*i*) Literary form of expression.

(*ii*) Disgust and indignation at the ugly, the foolish and the wicked.

(*iii*) Humour.

(*iv*) Desire to correct or reform.

(*v*) Some exaggeration of reality.

A good satirist is a critic with an aim to reform or correct certain vices, follies and abuses prevailing in the society or in an individual. For this the weapon he uses is that of laughter. In order to lash at what the satirist wants to correct, he quite often takes recourse to exaggeration. He exaggerates reality and then

lashes at it with full force. A satirist is different from the true humorist, who is gentle and sympathetic, whereas a satirist is bitter, savage and sharp, even coarse and brutal. A humorist laughs with others whereas a satirist laughs at others.

Shaw as a Dramatic-Satirist

Shaw's main aim was to bring about social reform, and through his play he attacked all those conventions, traditions and institutions which were outmoded and outdated. "He used satanic means—irony, sarcasm etc.,—to puncture a host of social institutions and conventions and so has presented a Mephistophelian image to the people." Cazamian says that satire is the leading feature of his plays, and laughter is merely the sugar-coating thrown over the traditional bitter pill: "The boldest outbreak of intelligence has always in England found acceptance through a pretended lightness of tone. By selecting comedy as his instrument, Shaw was following the tradition and obeying a just instinct. Laughter relieves the strain of the contrast too forcibly felt between human conventions and facts. Laughter allows one to tolerate irreverence, without condemning it." Shaw wanted everything in the society or in an individual according to his ideas and norms, and whatever went contrary to his beliefs, he criticised it in unambiguous terms.

His Plays Are Satires

Shaw was not a satirist of the type of Pope and Dryden. Dryden and Pope were satirist pure and simple, whereas Shaw is more of a social reformer than a satirist. In his plays we find Shaw attacking social institutions, codes and conventions. In one play after another he pulls down old idols by exaggerating their fault and thus holds them up to ridicule. He attacks the institution os marriage, love, sex and family, war, religion, the cult of respectabilityf democracy, dictatorship etc Shaw was an immoralist in th. sense of opposing current morals and manners, and a heretic ie challenging beliefs he wished to transform. In *Widower's Houses*n the problem is a problem of conscience and the play is an attack, upon society, not upon individuals. It is a satire on slum-landlordism.

"May I ask, Mr. Charteris, is this the New Humour ?" remarks one of the characters in *The Philanderer* to the hero. The play was, indeed, an example of the Shavian humour, the nature of which was to be disconcerting and exasperating. This play is a satire on the institutions of marriage and love, treated as a game between the sexes, within a highly unpleasant fantasia upon Victorian standards. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is a play about prostitution. Shaw himself says about this play that the play was written..."to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and maltreating women so shamefully that the poorer

of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together......Society, and not any individual, is the villain of the piece." Thus capitalism, the position of women, morals and social conscience come under heavy attack in this play.

Arms and the Man is an anti-romantic comedy. This play is an onslaught on idealism...which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals and the cause of national and personal 'moral chaos and anarchy'. *Candida* again, is an attack on the institution of marriage and love. Furthermore, *You Never Can Tell* is a play about love, where relations of husband and wife, parents and children, and lovers, are treated in a most comic manner. In *Man and Superman* conventional respectability and the romantic adoration of woman have been held up to ridicule. *John Bull's Other Island* is a play uncompromising in its presentation of the real old Ireland, and the age-long conflict between English and Irish people. English Imperialism comes under heavy fire in this play.

In *Major Barbara* Shaw attacks poverty. He writes that the greatest of our evils and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor. Shaw was an ardent advocate of equal distribution of wealth. He hated capitalistic society where poor are exploited of their right to exist. *The Doctor's Dilemma* is a play that contains an exposure of the medical profession, which, Shaw says in the preface, "has an infamous-character". Most of its members 'have no honour or conscience ; they are not scientists, they practise the abominations of vaccination and vivisection, and exhibit man's specific lust for cruelty'. So this play is a satire on the medical science and medical profession. In *Fanny's First Play* the critics, and in *Heartbreak House* European materialism, have been satirised. In *The Apple Cart*, he has satirised the institution of democracy. In *Saint Joan*, he has attacked the state and the Church and the authoritarian society, who are out to suppress the truth.

Conclusion

Thus we find that almost every aspect of society and human life has been dealt with and criticised and satirised wherever necessary by Shaw. But in his satire we do not find that bitterness and coarseness which is available in Pope. He conveys his feelings in a most light optimistic manner. His philosophy of Life Force gives us the hope of the gradual emergence of a superior race which would make society better and more rational. Thus we find his comedy free from gall and bitterness. He never attacks an individual— he is not personal. He attacks institutions. He is never offensive. His satire is a sugar-coated pill, which in taste is sweet but in effect very efficacious and is likely to cure the disease it has been prescribed for.

13

Shavian Politics

A Fabian Socialist

Shaw was primarily a Creative Evolutionist and an economist. But he was also deeply interested in political affairs. He started his career as a Fabian Socialist and delivered hundreds of speeches and wrote hundreds of articles championing one political cause or the other. His prefaces are little more than political tracts. More than half a dozen of his plays are purely political and *Everybody's Political What's What* is a big volume of political work. Politics, in short, occupied a large part of his attention.

A Political Philosopher

Shaw looked upon himself as a political philosopher and vehemently asserted that he cared more for politics than for anything else. His political opinions and doctrines at times bewildered his admirers. His proclamation that the Soviet Union was the nearest place to the earthly paradise, is an instance of his political bias. His political statements are often contradictory, one cancelling another. He has both praised and denounced democracy ; he has both denounced and acclaimed the dictators. His idea of a blood-test, as yet uninvented, by which men can be graded according to their political capacity is fantastic. Most of his political forecasts have been falsified by time ; and most of his political ideas have become outmoded.

Shaw was original in most of his thoughts and for this he was considered abnormal and described as the most extravagant paradoxer and an incurable jester. His abnormality is normal, his paradoxes are truths and his jokes are serious.

Irish Question

Although Shaw indulges in paradoxes and fantasies, no one can deny that he has stimulated critical thinking and given us a novel point of view from which we can survey our political problems. Take his attitude to the Irish question, for example. In *John Bull's Other Island* the peculiar feature of Shaw's approach is that he considers not what politics make of men but what men make of politics. It was unanimously believed that Land Purchase Bill

would be the panacea for all the misery and unrest of Ireland. The Irish peasants suffered because the landlords were divided from them by race and religion. Shaw shows that the sufferings of Ireland are not due to British policy but due to human cupidity. Keeping himself aloof alike from Ireland and from England, he studies the problem with impartiality and truth. He shows that the Irish peasants, far from being better off, are much worse off under the petty Irish land proprietors than they were under the big English landlords.

Shaw has no faith in nationalism as a cure for political and economic ills. He does not believe that Home Rule can solve Ireland's problems. In the preface, which is a first-rate political pamphlet, he says that English rule in Ireland is harmful to both England and Ireland. Shaw recommends Home Rule for Ireland because her (Ireland) claim to self-government is as reasonable as England's claim to it.

Shavian Politics : A Hack's Democracy

In the last years of his life, Shaw was occupied with the political problem of how to choose rulers and prevent them from abusing their authority. *The Apple Cart*, *On the Rocks* and *Geneva* and their prefaces are important documents of Shavian politics. The story of *The Apple Cart* is that of a conflict between the King of England and his labour cabinet sometime after the year 1962. By threatening to abdicate and go to the democratic poll as a commoner the King defeats the attempt of the popularly elected Prime Minister to reduce him to royal cipher. The Labour Cabal comes round all at once because it knows that the King as a commoner is sure to lead a formidable rival political party in the House of Commons.

The play exposes democracy as a fraud. Most of the members of the cabinet quarrel and squabble over trifles and waste their time in bungling and shouting. But there are some in the cabinet who have brains. Proteus, the Prime Minister, is a 'clever fellow'. But he is helpless before his quarrelsome cabinet as most of the ministers play into the hands of the capitalists. With such a cabinet, the Prime Minister is ultimately outwitted by the King.

King Magnus holds that democracy, as it is practised today, does not mean that the people govern. Shaw attacks the method of democratic election as the root of many of these evils. It is obvious that any ambitious idiot with a platform trick of gulling the public can win a democratic election.

Shaw once again attacked democracy some four years later in *On the Rocks*. In this play the butts of Shaw's derision are the popularly elected British Prime Minister and the Cabinet that direct the destinies of the British people.

Shaw attacked democracy also in *Heartbreak House*. This play is a symbol of the heart-breaking inefficiency of capitalist democracy. With men like Boss Mangan at the helm of political affairs, one of two things, as Hector says, must happen : "Either......some new creation will come to supplant us as we have supplanted the animals, or the heavens will fall in thunder and destroy us."

Shaw's Admiration For Dictators

Shaw has often been accused, and rightly so, of blind admiration for dictators. He gave three rousing cheers to Mussolini for describing liberty as a putrefying corpse. Adolf Hitler's description of British democracy as 'nothing but Anglo-Semitic plutocracy' was, according to him, unanswerable. About Stalin he was all praise.

Evidently Shaw wants democracy but he would not accept democracy as it is defined by Abraham Lincoln. He repudiates government by the people as an absurdity. He is even distrustful of the common man's ability to choose persons who are competent to govern.

His Conception of a Republic

Shaw's conception of a republic seems to be different from the popular conception of the subject. It seems to be a new kind of government. It differs from democracy in that the higher functions of government are free from direct popular control. It differs from aristocracy because in it the people have power to pass judgement on the ministers and cabinets, and suggest remedies and new methods. There is striking affinity between Shaw and Plato. Both are equally contemptuous about the common man, and both are exponents of government by able men.

Shaw did not have faith in the common man. The common man is foolish, credulous and irrational, and is therefore, incapable not only of governing but also of choosing persons who are competent to govern.

14

Shaw's Art of Characterisation

Characters : Living Human Beings

The exceptional variety and vividness of his characters is an outstanding characteristic of Bernard Shaw. He had an insight to enter into the minds of the people, to grasp their points of view and to objectify them in the expression of their personalities. These are the gifts that account for the range and variety of his characters. For creating his characters, he declared, he started with actual people, but in the process of creation, these people ceased to be his models and he conceived original characters who created their own situations. Shaw's characters, like those of Shakespeare, were carved out from observation but they were also the fruits of meditations. Shaw sought to present on the stage men and women not in their lives of weakness, confusion and commonness or in their monotonous day-to-day routine, but living people in their hidden selves, displayed in the bright hues of their marked absurdities.

. It has been often alleged that since Shaw is a propagandist, vocal to sell his ideas, his characters are only his mouth-pieces, mere versions of himself. This is far from being true. Shaw was deeply interested in people for their own sake, and intended that they should speak for themselves. Thus, it is common in his plays to find a character presenting an argument which runs counter to what is supposed to be Shaw's point of view. And this the characters are shown to be doing with the fullest possible freedom, without any prejudice whatever on the part of their author. Of course, Shaw indulged in propaganda, but his characters do much more than just speaking out their author's mind, they are living human beings with potentialities and individualities ; even idiosyncracies, and it is impossible to shut them down in any neat formula.

Shaw's Characters Are Individuals

When one thinks of the range and variety of Shaw's characters, Charles Dickens comes naturally to the mind. Like the

characters of Dickens, Shaw's characters are his own. No one of his characters could be in any other play than his, and, moreover, each character belongs firmly to the play in which he or she occurs. There are likenesses as between Broadbent, Undershaft and Tarleton, each being given to talking at length. But not one of these three can be mistaken for the other or could appear in any play but that to which he belongs. The same can be said of Shaw's Clergymen, Morell, Anderson and the Bishop of Chelsea as also of his low comedy characters—Burgess, Doolittle and the Burglar. His female characters are equally individualized ; Mrs. Warren, Candida, Lady Cicely, Ann and Eliza could never be mistaken one for the other.

Leading Characters

Though Shaw has created a vast variety of people, each easily recognisable, his genius shines in his leading characters. He lives by virtue of his Bluntschli, Saint Joan, Larry, Jack Tanner, Major Barbara and Valentine as Shakespeare lives by his Petruchio, Proteus, Berowne, Rosalind, Viola, Helena and Leontes, to mention only the comedies. It is, of course, true that the leading characters have with them one or more personages in the play who claim equality with the protagonists and sometimes are so interesting in themselves that they are drawn larger than the protagonists. Skylark is a case in point. In Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, the Irish Larry is over-shadowed by Broadbent and in *Heartbreak House* the young Ellie appears insignificant beside Hesione Hushaby. It nonetheless remains true that without a sufficiently strong, interesting and well-presented protagonist a play would fall through.

Shakespeare and Shaw Contrasted

The protagonist is the presentation (under the discipline of dramatic action) of a problem of conscience, or a personal relation or a social difficulty as the case may be, and not the mouth-piece of the playwright as it is wrongly believed. Shaw's characters, like those of Shakespeare, are not to be identified with dramatist, for both detach themselves from their creations. Shakespeare set his characters free, and although it is possible to find a little of his master in Hamlet and Macbeth frankly to create an image of Shakespeare out of a Hamlet and a Macbeth is impossible. Bernard Shaw cannot claim the same amount of negative capability. Shakespeare did not have to preach, he had to do all these things. This should explain the difference between them. But the similarity is also quite obvious. Shakespeare did not suffer with his tragic heroes, for he was not attached to them. Shaw also, having projected the comic situation of his heroes, did not suffer the comic consequences of their follies. As against both Shaw and Shakespeare, Dickens identified himself with his creations and suffered in their sufferings. That is the reason why the great dramatist was not able to write a single satisfactory novel.

Dramatic Situations

Drama lies in the spiritual conflict as the protagonist not only experiences but perceives it. A protagionst, who is not aware of situation, forefeits his claim to be a protagonist and degenerates into a helpless instrument of story telling. As Shaw's plays are comedies, the situation is reflected upon by the comic use in the person of the protagonist, and the conflict is perceived by an eye that pierces into a mind that interprets as well as by a heart that feels the comic element.

A clear understanding of the situation in which the characters operate and their limitations, as also the concentration with which they are presented is crucial to understand them. The dramatic art is not just the representation of actuality, but the representation of images in a vision, the vision being the dramatist's vision, projected in the light of the play through the eye of the protagonist.

It is when we understand that different plays have different dramatic situations that we shall realize li[ ]ening one character to the other or a version of the other Thus, sometimes Marchbanks in *Candida* is compared to Octavius in *Man and Superman.* The comparison is sadly misconceived. Marchbanks exists in relation to his own situation and is seen through his own eyes while Octavius exists in his relation to Tanner and is seen through Tanner's eyes. Even though the two have had the same model, they are two different creatures in different plays. The important thing about a Shavian play is that the character here is drawn in relation to the theme and the protagonist of the particular play.

Women Characters

Women occupy a place of prominence in Shaw's world. In his plays, he shows that they are not only to be lived, but respected and even feared. Though his love scenes burst with emotion, he tended always to intellectualise sexual relations. He approached emotion as though it needed to be intellectually experienced. However, he did not rationalize sex. On the contrary, he emphasised its irrationality. And because, it is beyond rational control, it has to be approached with respect. That is why Bernard Shaw does not treat sex frivolously in his plays It is a natural force of such power so fundamental to the life of man that while leading man into comic situations and having comic aspects it needs to be illuminated for man's salvation with the light of intelligence. Shaw put woman on a high pedestal because he held that they had to be adored for the sake of the race and that love should be lifted to the plane of consciousness. Thus Ellie's father in *Heartbreak House* significantly remarks : "You see, I have been in love really, the sort of love that only happens once." That is why Ellie is such a lovely girl. In his love scenes, particularly in *Man and Superman* and *The Apple Cart*

Shaw says that no other dramatist has said displaying the anatomy of love. It would be wrong to say that he lacked emotions. Perhaps he had excess of it and, hence, the need for intellectualizing. Higgins in *Pygmalian* has to appear obvious of emotions for the sake of self-protection. Such is the important role that Shaw assigns to women that in his plays they are the driving force and take the initiative not only in love but in almost everything. Outstanding among her women characters in this respect is the millionairess trained Eitzfassenden She is always ready to "take chance and to venture" which Shaw regards as one of the greatest human qualities. She speaks of the heart-tearing dangerous life of adventure called marriage.

Shaw presents an astonishing variety of women characters, all impelled by the passion of one kind or the other. Blanche in *Widower's Houses*, Julia in *The Philanderer* and Orinthia in *The Apple Cart* are all examples of the passion of love, but are as different from each other as women could possibly be. Vivie in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and Joan of Arc in *Saint Joan* represent another kind of passion, the passion for conscience, for God. Women like Mrs. Warren, Lady Cicely belong to the world and Candida belongs to herself. Such a gallery of remarkable women is hard to come across in the plays of any other dramatist except, of course, Shakespeare.

His Priests

Another prominent category among Shaw's characters are priests and religious men, most of them belonging to the church of England, though there are others of other orders too. With the exception of one, all are treated with respect and are allowed to have their say. Most notably in *Saint Joan*, a full gallery of ecclesiastical characters appears. In this play Shaw tries to do justice to all points of view, even those which he does not share, and keeps the whole on a level of impartiality.

No Models

Shaw had few models for his characters ; the sources are only misleading. Certainly, like every writer, he had hints from here and there, but no more. Sometimes it is wrongly suggested that he represented his love affair with Ellen Terry in *The Apple Cart* "A play cannot equal life. If it proceeds to do so, it is false. Art is not life, but what is in the artist's mind as he comprehends life. The truth in art is fidelity to the image." Characters in Shaw's plays are the images as they appeared to his inner eye. There certainly is some connection between Shaw as a man and the characters he creates, but to attempt to understand his characters and to interpret his plays by searching for incidents in the life of the playwight is fruitless. This is true of every great imaginative writer, but must invariably be so in the case of a successful dramatist. Ibsen

is another example, not to speak of Shakespeare. Greatness in drama depends on non-identification with creations of the dramatist, and Shaw certainly possessed that greatness. When some misguided critics assert that Shaw's characters are version of himself, they are, no doubt, wrong, but unwittingly they pay him the compliment for they show a perception of the unity of his work. Unity, however, is not sameness, and to say that Shaw's characters lack diversity or to say that he repeats the same characters over and over again, is untrue. When somebody accused Shaw of "playing ventriloquist" that is, a person expert in the art of producing sounds so that they seem to come from a person's place or a person at a distance from the speaker, Shaw ridiculed the idea by making Vaughan, a critic, say in the prologue to *Fanny's First Play* :

> Well, at all events you can't deny that the characters in this play are quite distinguishable from one another. That proves it's by Shaw, because all Shaw's characters are himself mere puppets—It's only the actors that make them seem different.

A dramatist who is so greatly conscious, would spare no pains to make his characters as they should be and not types or mere versions of himself.

15

Introduction to Major Barbara

A Play About Poverty

Major Barbara was written in 1905 and first produced by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 28th November 1905. Shaw underlined the theme of the play in the preface:

> The crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of fallen sisters and erring brothers, nor the grace, love and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagogy, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty.

Those who hold that men's minds and hearts are closely linked to their pockets and bank balances will consider *Major Barbara* Shaw's most provocative and urgent play. Economics, he points out, plays as big a part in his plays as does the knowledge of anatomy in the works of Michelangelo, and *Major Barbara* is the summit among his plays of his economic knowledge. Founded squarely on the so-called dismal science, the play revolves round money and the lack of money.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army in which Barbara, the heroine of the play and the daughter of the hero Andrew Undershaft, holds the rank of a Major was founded in 1877 by William Booth for the revival of religion among the masses. His book *Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), outlined the scheme of rescue work which soon became a prominent feature of the Army's activities. The movement was organised on a military model and at first met with much criticism and opposition. But in 1904 King Edward sent for General Booth

to express his admiration for the work. The Salvation Army progressively became active all over the world. Its social services included maternity homes, children's homes, industrial homes, prison gate homes, shelters and cheap food depots for the homeless, labour bureaus, farms, industrial schools and slum posts.

Shaw found the religious movement ushered in by the Salvation Army a welcome change. According to A. C. Ward :

> The Salvation Army preached and gave charity—food and shleter—to the poor and wretched. Shaw declared that the food and shelter, even though given out of pure-hearted compassion and Christian fellowship, became in practice a bribe which led those who received it into a hypocritical pretence of religious conversion in order that they might get the bare necessities of life in this world and the promise of eternal bliss in heaven hereafter. That is to say, they embraced or pretended to embrace Christianity because they were getting some material benefit here and the expectation of endless benefit to come. Shaw condemned this as mean bargaining with God. It was always his first principle that virtue consists in well doing without desire or thought of reward or any personal advantage. So long, however, as there is poverty and its attendant miseries there can, he believed, be no more pure religion

> In *Major Barbara*, therefore, we have an apparently paradoxical situation in which Shaw, a known crusader against war and destruction, becomes (if only by proxy through the characters in the play) the defender of a wholesale destroyer, Undershaft the armaments maker, against the salvationist ideals of his daughter Barbara. Moreover, the arguments of the destroyer of lives appear to triumph over those of the saver of souls.

A Religious Sermon

Major Barbara is a sermon. The subject is salvation of society and salvation of the human soul ; the text, blessed are the poor. As might be expected, Shaw's message is diametrically opposed to the lesson taught by Christian ethics. Shaw believed that the poor were unblessed. Since poverty was obviously the source of sin, no poor man could possibly hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. More important to Shaw, perhaps, was the fact that poverty was also the source of crime. To eliminate poverty, then, was a social as well as a moral imperative. A. C. Ward further says :

> Shaw did not support or excuse armaments making and selling ; but still less would he excuse poverty. Since the

armaments magnate in the play paid his workers enough to enable them to live in decency and self-respect and to know the satisfactions of life on earth. they were not the kind of human material that could be bribed into religion by gifts and promises. It had been easy for Barbara to convert men and women in the slums of London ; but at Perivale St. Andrews she faces a great challenge and a harder task.

She had joined the Salvation Army thinking she could cut herself off entirely from the world in which profit and wealth are obtained from anti-social sources such as the production of intoxicating drinks and weapons of war. When she learns that the work of the Salvation Army cannot be carried on without donations from those very sources—from, as she says, 'Drunkenness and Murder'—she suffers the tremendous shock she describes to her father later : 'I stood on the rock I thought eternal ; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me.'

The Major Conflict in the Plot

As in all Shaw's plays, the focus is on a conflict between the forces of conventionality and the power of a superior being - the Shavian hero. Ironically, since Shaw was a Socialist, the hero, Andrew Undershaft, is a multimillionaire capitalist, a manufacturer of munitions. Pitted against him is his daughter Barbara, a major in the Salvation Army. Undershaft is the apostle of Shaw's secular morality. Realizing that poverty breeds social discontent and thus constitutes a threat to capitalism, he uses his immense power to eliminate poverty, at least among his own workers. Barbara he recognizes to be a superior person possessed of true, but misguided moral energy. She has deluded herself into thinking that the converts she wins through her work in the Salvation Army have truly reformed, that the Army truly wins souls to the kingdom of God. Undershaft undertakes to convert her. On the other hand, Barbara deplores her father's profession, believing that he dedicates to the destruction rather than to the salvation of mankind. She undertakes to convert him.

The battle is one-sided, short. and decisive. Undershaft merely has to show Barbara that he, a dealer in death and destruction, can buy the Army's good graces for the price of a donation He shows that he and others like him— a distiller, for instance—provide the financial backing without which the Army would collapse. Crushed by her father's cynicism and what she considers the Army's hypocrisy, she turns in her uniform.

The play ends on a note of sardonic optimism. Undershaft's destruction of Barbara's faith is only a preliminary step ; he must now convert her to his own creed. This conversion he accomplishes by taking Barbara and the rest of his family on a tour of his factory and Perivale St. Andrews, the town in which his workers live. The town turns out to be a workingman's paradise. Instead of the misery and squalor which Barbara expects, she finds prosperity and sanitation. Realizing at last that it is impossible to save hungry men's souls, she resolves to devote her energies to saving the souls of the well-fed.

Directly involved in this struggle for Barbara's soul is her suitor, Adolphus Cusins, a professor of Greek, who, to please Barbara, neglects his studies to play the bass drum in the Salvation Army band. Cusins is important, too, in the thematic structure of the play because he is the third member of the triumvirate which is to save society. Undershaft, following the tradition of his predecessors in the munitions business, disinherits his own son Stephen and adopts Adolphus as his protege and heir. To Undershaft's power and Barbara's moral fervour, Adolphus adds intellect. In this combination, presumably, lay Shaw's hope for the salvation of society.

The Minor Characters : Their Significance

The minor characters serve both to act out the message of the play and to provide much of the humour. They are divided into two classes : rich and poor. The poor class is represented by the rascals and reprobates who frequent Barbara's Salvation Army shelter. Of these, by far the most typical are Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens, both of whom feign a desire for spiritual sustenance and testify to their conversion to Christianity in return for free meals. The most pathetic is Peter Shirley, who at forty-five has been thrown out of work because he has a streak of gray in his hair. A disciple of Thomas Paine, he swallows his pride to accept a free meal only when he is starving. By far the meanest and funniest is Bill Walker, who comes to the shelter to pommel his girl friend because she deserted him when she was converted. A bully and ruffian, he provides the funniest scene of the play when, after blackening the eye of one of Barbara's young female assistants, he is shamed into an excruciating sense of guilt by Barbara's reproofs. His role as a foil to Undershaft is apparent when Bill tries to atone for the black eye by giving a donation to the Army.

The Idle Rich Characters

The idle rich are represented by Undershaft's wife, son, younger daughter, and the latter's suitor. Lady Britomart and her son Stephen reek of conventional morality. A typical domineering

mother, Lady Britomart abhors her husband's immorality but does not hesitate to capitalize on it, accepting his money to ensure her children's comfortable place in society. Stephen, though cowed at first by his mother, declares his independence toward the end of the play and is rewarded with a career in journalism by his amused father. Charles Lomax, Sarah's suitor, demonstrates the utter frivolity and vacuity of the rich. Although these are stock characters borrowed from Oscar Wilde's drawing-room comedies, they are vigorous and funny.

Conclusion

Shaw's success in creating such thoroughly delightful characters is the key to the success of *Major Barbara*. Without the relief of humour which each and every character provides, the moralizing and preaching would be tedious. It is by no means certain, however, that Shaw converted anyone to his brand of secular morality by using such a dramatic technique. The play is so amusing that it is difficult to take the theme seriously. But in the process of entertaining his audiences, Shaw was able at least to acquaint them with serious ideas. Surely he did not expect to accomplish more.

While *Major Barbara* is seriously concerned with social and religious questions, it follows Shaw's invariable principle and practice of presenting the material entertainingly in terms of effectiveness on the stage. The characters are human beings in their own right, speaking their own language, and not serving simply as mouthpieces for the expression of Shaw's ideas and opinions. The characteristics of the Salvation Army are more than illustrated ; they are brought to life and fully fashioned : earnestness and ecstasy in Barbara ; *naivete* and courage in Jenny Hill ; hard practical sense in Mrs. Baines ; exuberance in Adolphus Cusins

Throughout *Major Barbara* Shaw displays a complete mastery of stage dialogue. The play is packed with intellectual discussion, yet the dialogue is so skilfully managed that the clash of ideas and convictions is more engrossing than any elaborate stage spectacle with exciting action could be. The play is replete with wit and fun.

Major Barbara is not a dull or boring play. The play is a wrestling match between Shaw the economist and Shaw the dramatist, and fortunately for the theatre-goer the dramatist wins hands down.

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Characters and Locale in Major Barbara

(A) CHARACTERS

(1) Sir Andrew Undershaft	: A munitions tycoon. He is over fifty, stoutish, easy going, masterful ; a man who possesses formidable reserves of strength both physical and mental. He is the largest figure in the play.
(2) Lady Britomart Undershaft	: Sir Andrew Undershaft's domineering wife. She is fifty or more, a "typical managing matron of the upper class" ; she is said to have been suggested by the late Countess of Carlisle, Gilbert Murray's mother-in-law.
(3) Barbara	Undershaft's elder daughter, a major in the Salvation Army. She is lively, robust and energetic, intelligent, attractive, thoughtful and conscientious ; Shaw obviously loves her. The action is on her shoulders. Though not the largest character, she is the protagonist.
(4) Sarah	: Undershaft's younger daughter. A tall and commonplace girl.
(5) Stephen	: Undershaft's son. A correct and serious young man of twenty-five.

(6) Adolphus Cusins	: A professor of Greek ; intellectual, determined, intolerant. A very good and sympathetic, though comic, portrait of Professor Gilbert Murray.
(7) Charles Lomax	: Sarah's suitor. He is a young man about town, with a sense of humour.
(8) Morrison	: Lady Britomart's butler.
(9) Snobby Price	: A young workman.
(10) Rummy Mitchens	: An old bundle of poverty and worn-out humanity.
(11) Jenny Hill	: A pretty Salvationist lassie of eighteen.
(12) Peter Shirley	: A starving worn-out elderly man.
(13) Bill Walker	: A tough customer of about twenty-five.
(14) Mrs. Baines	: A Salvation Army Commissioner, about forty, earnest, appealing.
(15) Bilton	: A foreman at the ammunition works.

(B) LOCALE

(1) London	: Most of the action takes place in the drawing-room of Lady Britomart's house in London.
(2) Perivale St. Andrews	: The town in which Undershaft's workers live.

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Synopsis of Major Barbara

ACT I

Family Affairs Discussed

As the play opens, we find Lady Britomart, a proud aristocratic woman, talking to her son, Stephen. The problem being discussed is to get money from Sir Andrew Undershaft, Lady Britomart's husband, from whom she has been separated for a very long time. Lady Britomart has two daughters—Barbara and Sarah—who are engaged and are about to marry. Barbara is engaged to Adolphus Cusins, a Professor of Greek, and Sarah to Charles Lomax, a young man about town.

Andrew Undershaft is an armament maker and both Lady Britomart and Stephen have no respect for him on account of his being a munitions magnate. He earns millions of pounds, has all Europe under his thumb, but he is not ashamed of his trade. Lady Britomart is worried about her son and daughters. She wants to provide for them. For this purpose she has invited her husband. Her objective is to extract a larger allowance of money from him. She also wants that Undershaft should not disinherit their son Stephen from succeeding him in his business and should thus discontinue the Undershaft tradition of passing the family business to a foundling.

A Bargain Struck Between Barbara and Undershaft

Andrew Undershaft arrives and is pleased to see his children. He has been away from his children since their infancy. He is particularly attracted by his daughter, Barbara, who is a major in the Salvation Army. As a salvationist she has saved the souls of thouasnds of criminals and infidels. There is a wide ideological and temperamental gap between the father and the daughter, and this becomes the chief focus of attention in the play.

Barbara invites her father Undershaft to the Salvation Shelter at the sign of the cross in West Ham. She, however, warns him that after seeing the work of the Salvationists, he is likely to become a convert and give up the cannons for the Salvation Army. Undershaft agrees to pay a visit to the Salvation Shelter on the condition that she will visit his works at the sign of the sword in Perivale St. Andrews in Canning Town. He also accepts her challenge and retorts: "Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the Cannons ?"

ACT II

Undershaft at the Salvation Shelter

Andrew Undershaft visits the West Ham Shelter of the Salvation Army. At the Salvation Shelter, Undershaft remains unmoved. He continues to believe that his arms-manufacturing trade is more effective in the task of soul-saving than the charitable activities of the Salvationists. Barbara is forced to reassess the character of her father when a financial crisis is reported in the Salvation Army. Unless money is arranged immediately from some source, the activities of the Army will cease. Fortunately, Lord Saxmundham, the manufacturer of Bodger's whisky, offers a sum of pounds 5,000 on the condition if pounds 1,000 each is donated by five other gentlemen. Undershaft seizes the opportunity of helping the Army and writes a cheque of pounds 5,000. But Barbara shows repulsion to her father's money which she believes is tainted. Mrs. Baines, a superior member of the Salvation Army, and Adolphus Cusins, Barbara's suitor, overcome her repulsion. But the whole circumstance shocks Barbara. Her faith is jolted and she tells her father : "I stood on the rock I thought eternal ; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me, an army marching to Salvation with me : and in a moment, at a stroke of your pen in a cheque book, I stood alone ; and the heavens were empty."

Barbara Disillusioned

Barbara is of the view that the Army must not sell itself in this way. She is completely disillusioned. As they prepare to march to their great assembly with the flourish of the drum and the trombone, with her father and Cusins leading the march, she throws off her badge and coat and refuses to go with them. She even refuses to pray for them, and says that perhaps she will never pray again.

ACT III

A Visit to Perivale St. Andrews

In this third and last act Barbara and her family visit the town of Perivale St. Andrews. They find it a clean, fine place, where everybody is well-fed and well-clad. It is, in fact, a kind of socialistic community with this great difference ; instead of being pervaded with a spirit of equality and independence, the whole place is honeycombed with snobbishness and petty oppression.

Barbara Converted

Undershaft educates her daughter. He persuades her to accept the belief that capitalists save the souls of poor, hungry, miserable people better by providing them with respectable jobs. He suggests that the bread and treacle and dreams of heaven offered by the Salvation Army sustain poverty which blights whole cities and spreads horrible pestilence. Poverty, he says, is the worst of crimes and souls are not saved by words and dreams but by "thirty eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job." He tells Barbara that it is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other.

Undershaft succeeds in winning her daughter to his viewpoint. Barbara admits before Cusins :

> I was happy in the Salvation Army for a moment. I escaped from the world into a paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul saving ; but the moment our money ran short, it all came back to Bodger ; it was he who saved our people : he, and the Prince of Darkness, my Papa. Undershaft and Bodger : their hands stretch everywhere ; when we feed a starving fellow creature, it is with their bread, because there is no other bread ; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow ; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our back on life.

This indeed is the moral which Undershaft wants to impress on the officials of the Salvation Army. But it is not easy to defeat Barbara in her ideology and mission. She now resolves to save all the human souls, not only weak souls in starved bodies, but full-fed. snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their little rights and dignities. She tells Cusins that in view of her new approach, her father shall never throw it in her teeth again that her converts were bribed with bread. She exclaims :

I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women.

Succession Problem Solved

The succession problem has also been solved. According to Undershaft tradition, only a foundling could succeed him. Undershaft accepts Cusins as his successor, who discloses the truth of his being a foundling. Barbara accuses him of having sold his soul for money. But Cusins informs her that he has not sold his soul for money or position or comfort, but for reality and for power.

Barbara Accepts Cusins

Barbara now realises that there are no good and wicked sides to life. One must face life with all its evil and wickedness ; one should not live a useless life of middle-class respectability. If Cusins had rejected her father's offer, she would have rejected him for it would have meant running away from the reality of life. So Barbara accepts Cusins.

Barbara Finds Her Vocation

Barbara has also found a new vocation. She would pass through the factory of death—"raising Hell to Heaven, and man to God," and unveiling an eternal light in the valley of the shadow. Her courage has revived : she would be Major Barbara again and die with the colours. She is transfigured. She is beyond herself with joy and shouts the Salvation Army slogan ; "Glory Hallelujah."

Then Barbara calls her mother and asks her to help her find a suitable house in the village where she may live with her Dolly (Cusins). The play ends with Undershaft asking Cusins to come at six o'clock the next morning and begin work.

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Outline Story of Major Barbara

ACT I

Lady Britomart's Concern For Family

As the play opens we see Lady Britomart at work at her writing table. She is a lady of birth and position, "well mannered yet appallingly outspoken and indifferent to the opinions of her interlocutors, arbitrary and high-tempered to the last bearable degree, full of class prejudices, conceiving the universe exactly as if it were a large house in Wilton Crescent, though handling her corner of it very effectively on that assumption." She is Barbara's mother and has been living apart from her husband, Andrew Undershaft, for years.

As soon as her son Stephen enters, she asks him to assume a part at least of the family responsibility, for their affairs are now getting beyond her control. But Stephen says that he has never meddled with family affairs and would not like to meddle with them in future also. On this her mother rebukes him.

Lady Britomart is worried about her family affairs. She has two grown-up daughters—Sarah and Barbara. They are engaged to young men without money, and this has compelled Lady Britomart to ask her husband to call upon her in order that she may persuade him to make a fitting provision for them. Sarah is a very ordinary society girl, whereas Barbara has a genius for saving souls, and is already a prominent officer in the Salvation Army. She is engaged to Cusins, a professor of Greek, who fell in love with her and proposed under the impression that she was an ordinary Salvation Army lass. Sarah is engaged to Charles Lomax who would be a millionaire after ten years. But during the coming ten years he has only pounds 800 a year. So Lady Britomart wants to provide for her three children to enable them to live comfortably, and for this she has invited her husband, who alone can provide them with the money they need.

The Undershaft Tradition

Lady Britomart had separated from her husband partly because he had been manufacturing explosives and cannons and thus dealing out death and destruction, and partly because he did wrong things and then justified them. She preferred to live apart from her husband because she did not want him to put his wicked ideas into the head of her children. Furthermore, Undershaft wanted to adopt a foundling to succeed him in his business, and thus disinherit his own son, Stephen. Andrew Undershaft wanted to follow the tradition set by his ancestors to leave the cannon business to an adopted foundling named Andrew Undershaft. This was intolerable to Lady Britomart, and hence they separated.

Stephen's Disgust

Stephen is disgusted with his father making money in such a scandalous fashion by selling arms and munitions. He would not like to touch even a penny of it. He would prefer to live in poverty in some cheap place like Bedford Square rather take a farthing of his father's money. But Lady Britomart shocks him when she tells him that the money on which they have been living comes from him. The income was settled upon her when they had separated. Now she wants more money not for herself but for her children.

Undershaft Arrives

As expected Andrew Undershaft comes. Since he is visiting his children after a very long time, in the first instance, he fails to recognise them. He thinks that Charles Lomax and Adolphus are also his sons, that he has five children instead of three, and that memory has played him false. He is snubbed by his wife. He is then introduced to his children. Of all Undershaft's family Barbara alone interests him, and his heart goes out to her, though he would resent such a description of his feelings. He takes keen interest in the Salvation Army and remarks that its motto—"Blood and Fire"—might be his own, though different in nature : his sort of 'blood' also cleanses, and his sort of 'fire' also purifies. Barbara is much delighted by his interest in the Salvation Army and invites him to visit their West Ham Shelter.

In a discussion of the moral aspects of the cannon business, Undershaft justifies his ideology of destruction and war. Lady Britomart feels that Undershaft has won the affection of the children in the very first meeting.

Undershaft Invited to Salvation Army Shelter

Both Undershaft and Barbara have religious natures, but the beliefs of each are poles asunder. Each wishes to convert the other

and they strike a bargain : Undershaft will visit Barbara's Salvation Army Shelter, if she will afterwards visit his gun-manufactory. The second act is laid at the shelter.

ACT II

Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens

Snobby Price, a workman out of employment, and Rummy Mitchens, a poor and worn-out young woman, are in conversation at the West Ham Shelter of the Salvation Army. Snobby Price is a painter by profession. He shirks work, steals things and often gets sacked. Both Rummy Mitchens (Rummy is short for Romola) and Snobby Price pretend to be wicked so that they may be saved and enjoy the charity of the Salvation Army. Snobby has come there on his own will, and intends telling them that he gambled and beat his mother (though in reality it was his mother who beat him) so that they may believe that he is 'converted' and 'saved'. And he may continue to get their charity. Their 'confessions' and their 'conversions' are lies to cheat the Salvationists. This is how the religion is being abused. There is as much hypocrisy among the poor as among the rich.

Peter Shirley

The conversation of Snobby Price and Rummy is interrupted. Jenny Hill, a pretty Salvation girl of eighteen, brings in Peter Shirley, a worn out elderly man, weak with hunger. He has been thrown out of his job. Jenny offers food to him, but he refuses to take it, because he dislikes charity. But he is persuaded by Jenny to take it ; she suggests that he can pay them back for it when he gets a job. He eats his food ravenously, for he has not eaten anything for many days.

Bill Walker : The Ruffian

Bill Walker, a bullying sort of ruffian of about twenty-five, slouches in to recover 'his girl', who has been recently converted ; and when Jenny Hill tells him that she has gone away, he hits her in the mouth. Now, this blow very nearly brings about his own conversion ; for Jenny Hill does not resent it, and Major Barbara takes advantage of the shame which begins to stir in him to make him more and more uncomfortable. His impulse is to buy back his peace of mind and self-respect by getting thrashed by his girl's new Salvation Army 'bloke' (Todger Fairmile, a wrestler), and failing in this, he offers Jenny a sovereign. Barbara tells him he cannot buy his salvation ; she wants to touch his heart, and if he were to think he had made amends, he would go away as stupid and brutal as he came.

Undershaft Visits Salvation Army Shelter

Undershaft, in the meantime, arrives at the Salvation Army Shelter. He watches with grim sympathy Barbara's soul-saving process vis-a-vis Bill Walker. Barbara goes in to attend to her work, and Cusins and Undershaft are left alone to talk together. Cusins asks him if he has any religion. Undershaft replies that he has an original religion. His religion is "Money and gun-powder," and he is proud of this religion. because it makes life happy, strong and safe. But Cusins points out that Barbara would never like his religion and thus he will have to choose between his religion and his daughter. When Undershaft asks Cusins for "how much a year is she to be loved for ever," he replies that he can maintain Barbara only on what he can earn by teaching Greek. That may not be enough for her, but as he has set his heart on marrying her, he will do so despite all obstacles in his way. He will ensure that nobody else marries her. Undershaft admires his determination and says that he is a young man after his own heart, and asks him to shake hands as a sign of their friendship. Cusins calls him an 'infernal old rascal', but shakes hands with him because he appeals to his "ironic sense of humour".

Undershaft's Resolve

Undershaft informs Cusins that they should have nothing to do with the common mob which consists of slaves and idolators. When Cusins suggests that Barbara loves the common people and she will feel offended if she heard him talk in that way, he frankly replies that to be in love with the common people is to be in love with dirt, poverty, disease and suffering.

> Such passions are not virtues, but the most unnatural of all the vices. This love of the common people may please an earl's grand-daughter and a university professor ; but I have been a common man and a poor man ; and it has no romance for me. Leave it to the poor to pretend that poverty is a blessing : leave it to the coward to make a religion of his cowardice by preaching humility : we know better than that. We three must stand together above the common people : how else can we help their children to climb up beside us ? Barbara must belong to us, not to the Salvation Army.

Undershaft is determined to get Barbara out of the Salvation Army, and since he cannot purchase her he will purchase the Army. It will be easy to do so, for all religious organisations sell themselves to the rich.

Barbara's Idealism

Barbara, Snobby Price and Jenny Hill return from their meeting at the end of Cripps Lane. Snobby's confession that he beat his mother moved the audience and the collection amounted to "Four and ten pence." They needed only two pence to make it a round sum of five shillings. Undershaft offers to contribute the two pence, but Barbara refuses the offer on the plea that his is the tainted money earned by selling deadly instruments of death and destruction. She tells her father that he must work for his Salvation ; he cannot buy it for two pence. When Undershaft offers to pay more, if two pence is not enough, Barbara is further offended.

At this point Bill Walker returns. He is dejected. He reveals that he has been used as a carpet by Todger Fairmile, who led prayers for his salvation. His feelings of guilt for having struck Jenny Hill are still preying on him. He wants to discharge his debt with money, and throws a sovereign down on an upturned drum in order to buy peace of mind. But Barbara still maintains that the Army is not to be bought and that nothing less than Bill's soul will suffice. However, Snobby Price drops his cap on the sovereign thrown by Bill, and later he steals it.

Army Purchased By Undershaft

Mrs. Baines, the General of the Army, complains of lack of money, because of which the work of the Army is being hampered. She, however, announces a moment later that Sir Horace Bodger, the whisky-distiller, has offered a pounds 5,000 subscription if another pounds five thousands can be raised from five other gentlemen. The money is of vital importance to the Army ; indeed this shelter will have to be closed if funds are not forthcoming. Barbara is shocked, for Bodger is a distiller and he has earned his money by selling wine. But Undershaft is full of praise for Bodger for this charitable act. However, Mrs. Baines is very much pleased, and she requests Undershaft to help them by persuading five of his rich friends to give them one thousand pounds each. Undershaft at once offers to give the five thousands they need, and writes out a cheque so that they may show it to the people at their great meeting that afternoon in the Assembly Hall in the Mile End Road.

Barbara's Anguish

Barbara is shocked and disillusioned and protests that the tainted money of Bodger and Undershaft should not be accepted. But Mrs. Baines tries to pacify her and points out that Bodger has given money to have his soul saved, and that they must help him as they help others. Barbara retorts that the money has been given to purchase them. Mrs. Baines tries to convince Barbara by saying :

> Barbara, will there be less drinking or more if all those poor souls we are saving come tomorrow and find the doors of our shelters shut in their faces ? Lord Saxmundham Bodger gives us the money to stop drinking— to take his own business from him.

Undershaft admires this disinterested self-sacrificing act of Bodger, and claims a little disinterestedness for himself also, when he points out :

> Think of my business, think of the widows and orphans, the men and lads, torn to pieces with shrapnel and poisoned with lyddite, the oceans of blood, not one drop of which is shed in a really just cause, the ravaged crops, the peaceful peasants forced, women and men, to till their fields under the fire of opposing armies on pain of starvation, the bad blood of the fierce little cowards at home who egg on others to fight for the gratification of their national vanity. All this makes money for me : I am never richer, never busier than when the papers are full of it. Well, it is your work to preach peace on earth and goodwill to men. Every convert you make is a vote against war. Yet I give you this money to help you to hasten my own commercial ruin.

Thus Shaw presents both sides of the picture and leaves it to us draw our own conclusions. But Barbara still continues to be of the view that the money must not be accepted, and that the Army must not sell itself in this way.

As they prepare to march to their great assembly with the flourish of the drum and the trombone, with her father and Cusins leading the march, Barbara throws off her badge and coat and refuses to go with them. She even refuses to pray for them, and says that perhaps she will never pray again.

ACT III

Prince of Darkness

Adolphus Cusins informs that after the meeting they indulged in drinking till late in the night. He further says that he drank in the company of Andrew Undershaft, the "Prince of Darkness".

Barbara then asks Cusins to tell her as to what happened at the meeting. Cusins informs her that it was an amazing meeting, that Mrs. Baines almost died of emotion, that Jenny Hill gibbered with hysteria, that the Prince of Darkness played his trombone like a madman and that 117 conversions took place then and there. They prayed for Bodger and for the anonymous donor of pounds 5,000,

that is Undershaft who would not let his name be given. He would not like his name to be disclosed for he thought that other charitable institutions would be down on him like kites. Lady Britomart comments that Andrew always does the proper thing, but gives the most improper reasons for it. We are also told here that Cusins has left the Salvation Army.

Undershaft and Stephen

At this point Andrew Undershaft comes. Lady Britomart sends the children to get ready to go to visit their father's 'works'. Alone with her husband Lady Britomart asks him to provide pounds 800 a year for Sarah and a larger sum for Barbara. Undershaft agrees to do so. But when Lady Britomart talks about Stephen, Undershaft frankly tells her that he is not interested in him. According to the Undershaft tradition only a foundling can succeed him. Lady Britomart considers the Undershaft-tradition as wicked ; she becomes angry. But Undershaft does not lose patience. He informs her that he must choose his successor at the earliest, for he is getting old and his partner Lazarus insists that the question of succession must be settled immediately.

At this point Stephen arrives. Asked by Undershaft if he wants to enter the cannon business, Stephen replies that he has no intention of entering any trade or business, and that he wants to enter politics. Undershaft ridicules him and tells him :

> I am the government of our country : I and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus ? No, my friend : you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesnt. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country. Be off with you, my boy, and play with your caucuses and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning questions and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting-house to play the piper and call the tune. To think that the Parliament governs the country is a romantic illusion ; the real rulers are the big houses who control the press and the politicians.

But Stephen does not agree with his father. In his opinion it is the character, the English National Character, formed in English public schools and universities, which really governs the country.

The Works of Undershaft

The scene now shifts to the works of Undershaft and Lazarus in the Parish of St. Andrews in Middlesex. The place is beautiful, neat and clean. There are cannons and chimneys all around. The place is fascinating.

Sir Andrew Undershaft comes out of his office beaming with joy, for his aerial battleship has been a tremendous success At its first trial it could wipe out an entire fort with three thousand soldiers in it. Barbara and others are horrified at the cruel destruction. But Stephen is fascinated by it; he calls it a triumph of organisation and regards his father as a genius. But he feels that the workers live too luxuriously; they are pampered and this may weaken them and sap their vitality. But Undershaft assures him that there is no such fear; the workers live in the constant anxiety of being blown up at any moment. The explosives are made in a number of little sheds, and even a little carelessness may cause a dangerous explosion. In the meantime Bilton, the foreman, comes. He is followed by Charles Lomax. Charles lights a match and throws it in one of the sheds. As a precautionary measures, Undershaft takes away his match box and this reassures Bilton and he goes away. This incident dramatically suggests the constant danger the workers have to face in the factory.

The Foundling Inherits the Business

Lady Britomart has taken a round of the town and she has been fascinated by it. She is determined to have it. She suggests that Undershaft should make Adolphus his heir, and in that case the entire property will pass on to Barbara. Undershaft agrees, and thinks Cusins to be the right man to inherit his business. But the prob'em is that Cusins is not a foundling. However, Cusins himself solves this problem when he informs Undershaft that he (Cusins) is a foundling in England, for his mother was the sister of his father's dead wife, and such a marriage is illegal according to English laws. Undershaft accepts the argument and considers Cusins to be a foundling. Then there crops up another difficulty. The Undershaft heir must be uneducated. This difficulty is also overcome by Cusins when he points out that he has not been educated in an English public school, and that Greek, instead of weakening his mind, has nourished and strengthened it. Undershaft is delighted and he pronounces Adolphus Cusins to be his heir.

The Bargain

In the bargain scene which follows, Cusins proves to be a shrewd worldly-wise man. He is ready to change his name to Andrew Undershaft and become his partner if he gives him two thousand five hundred pounds a year for two years. If in the third

year, he finds him to be a worthy partner, he will have to pay him at the rate of five thousand a year ; and will also pay the balance at this rate for the previous two years, plus ten per cent on the profits. This is a very heavy price but he knows that Andrew Undershaft will pay it. He points out : "You cannot do without me ; and I cannot do without you." The bargain is ultimately made with Undershaft agreeing to pay three-fifths of what he has demanded.

The Faith of an Armourer

The bargain is struck. But there is a *little* snag. Lady Britomart points out that he should sell his cannons only to those whose cause is just, and not to foreigners and criminals. But Undershaft at once retorts that it is against the faith of an Armourer, which requires that weapons must be sold to all without any distinction. He tells Cusins that if he enters the cannon business, he must give

> arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect for persons or principles : to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man, white man and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and all crimes. The first Undershaft wrote up in his shop IF GOD GAVE THE HAND. LET NOT MAN WITHHOLD THE SWORD. The second wrote up ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FIGHT : NONE HAVE THE RIGHT TO JUDGE. The third wrote up to MAN THE WEAPON : TO HEAVEN THE VICTORY. The fourth had no literary turn ; so he did not write up anything ; but he sold cannons to Napoleon under the nose of George the Third. The fifth wrote up PEACE SHALL NOT PREVAIL SAVE WITH A SWORD IN HER HAND. The sixth, my master, was the best of all. He wrote up NOTHING IS EVER DONE IN THIS WORLD UNTIL MEN ARE PREPARED TO KILL ONE ANOTHER IF IT IS NOT DONE. After that, there was nothing left for the seventh to say. So he wrote up, simply, UNASHAMED.

On this Cusins calls Undershaft a Machiavelli, and tells him that he will write something in Greek so that he (Undershaft) will not be able to read it. Cusins further tells him that as regards the Armourer's faith, he will have his own way. He will "sell cannons to whom I please and refuse them to whom I please."

Undershaft's Views on Power and Poverty etc.

Undershaft suggests that perhaps Cusins is lusting for power. To this Cusins retorts that if he had lusted for power he would not have entered the business, for even Undershaft has no power at all. Undershaft does not drive the place ; it drives him. In fact the place is driven "by the most rascally part of society, the money hunters, the pleasure-hunters. The military promotion hunters ; and he is their slave." But Undershaft does not agree with this view. Then he asks Barbara to explain to Cusins as to what power really means. Barbara says that till yesterday she thought she was in the power of God, but now she has realised that she is in the power of Bodger and Undershaft.

Then Undershaft advances arguments for religious and moral reforms. He says that when our machinery becomes outdated and worn out we scrap it, our religion and morality have outlived their utility, yet we still cling to it. After this, Undershaft gives his views about poverty. He considers poverty to be the worst of crimes : "Only fools fear crime : we all fear poverty." He points out that the soul of the poor can be saved more easily by paying them a decent salary. If they are better fed and better housed they will also be more noble and generous. He challenges Barbara and others to do the work of salvation among his workers. They have souls which cry for salvation, but they are well-fed and comforted and so cannot easily be bribed and tempted by the offer of food in this world and promise of a blessed life in the other. Undershaft further says that poverty and slavery cannot be eradicated by sermons and preaching. They have stood up for centuries against preaching, but they cannot stand up against his machine guns. His advice is "Don't preach at them ; don't reason with them. Kill them."

Undershaft further points out that power springs from the barrel of a gun, and social justice cannot be eradicated through the ballot. The right to vote has no meaning in the present circumstances.

Lady Britomart Annoyed

Lady Britomart is annoyed and asks her children to come to her and cut their wicked father. But the children refuse to do so. She then abuses them : "Charles Lomax : you are a prig. Barbara : you are a lunatic. Andrew : you are a vulgar tradesman. Now you all know my opinion ; and my conscience is clear, at all events." But Undershaft sarcastically remarks : "You are the very incarnation of morality. Your conscience is clear and your duty done, when you have called everybody names."

Cusins and Barbara

Undershaft tells Cusins to come to the foundry at six, the next morning, and then he disappears in one of the sheds. Stephen

tells Cusins that he is proud of his father. Stephen has obviously been converted by his father. Then Cusins and Barbara are alone. Cusins asks Barbara if she would marry him or not, in view of the fact that he is going to join the cannon business. Barbara assures him that she understands the reality of the situation and that there are no good and wicked sides to life. She wants to face life with all its wickedness and evil, and does not want to live a useless life of middle-class respectability. She tells Cusins that if he had rejected her father's offer, she would have rejected him, for it would have meant running away form the reality of life. She would have married the man who accepted the offer, for like her mother, she also would never like to lose that place. Therefore, Barbara accepts Cusins. The Act ends with Barbara's conversion, and she decides to live with Dolly (Cusins) in the village.

19

Detailed Summary of Major Barbara

ACT I

The Setting

The scene takes place in the library in Lady Britomart Undershaft's house in Wilton Crescent. The time is after dinner in January 1916. Lady Britomart is busy at her writing table. She is a woman of fifty or thereabouts. She is well dressed and yet careless of her dress ; she is well bred and yet quite reckless of her breeding. She is well mannered though outspoken ; she is a peremptory, arbitrary and high-tempered matron of the upper class, treated as a naughty child until she grew into a scolding mother. She has plenty of practical ability and worldly experience.

Her son, Stephen, comes in. He is a young man under 25, and is in some awe of his mother, from childish habit and bachelor shyness rather than from any weakness of character.

Lady Britomart Rebukes Stephen

The play begins with Lady Britomart rebuking her son, Stephen, when he begins to read a Liberal weekly called *The Speaker*, or when he begins to fiddle with his tie or his watch chain. She wants him to pay full attention to what she is going to tell him. She asks him as to when he would realize that he is a grown up man and that she is only a woman. She tells him that he must learn to face life seriously and that she cannot bear the whole burden of the family affairs any longer. He must advise her : he must assume the responsibility. He has received a good education ; he has been to Harrow and Cambridge and has travelled abroad to India and Japan. He must have learnt a lot of things, and therefore must be in a position to manage the family affairs. Stephen is much perplexed. He points out that he has never interfered in the household matters. But her mother

rebukes him and tells him that he must interfere now, for the family affairs are getting beyond her control. To Stephen's remark that in that case he will have to refer to certain painful matters, Lady Britomart points out that perhaps he means his father. She further says that they cannot avoid referring to him, however painful the matter may be, for they have to deal with him about the girls ; they have to ensure that the girls are well-provided for in life.

Sarah and Barbara

Lady Britomart has two daughters, Sarah and Barbara. Both of them are engaged. Sarah is engaged to Charles Lomax who will be a millionaire at 35, that is after ten years, and in the meantime his trustees cannot, under the terms of his father's will, allow him more than pounds 800 a year, which is too small an amount for them to live comfortably on. So Sarah will have to find at least another pounds 800 a year for the next ten years, and "even then they will be as poor as church mice." But Stephen points out that according to the will, if Charles Lomax increases his income by his own exertions, the trustees may double the increase. To this Lady Britomart replies that Charles Lomax's exertions are much more likely to decrease his income than to increase it. Therefore, it is essential that Sarah is adequately provided for.

As regards Barbara, she has joined the Salvation Army, has discharged her maid, and lives on a pound a week. She has fallen in love

> with a professor of Greek whom she has picked up in the street, and who pretends to be a Salvationist, and actually plays the big drum for her in public because he has fallen head over ears in love with her.

Lady Britomart further points out that Adolphus Cusins will make a very good husband. She opines :

> After all, nobody can say a word against Greek : it stamps a man at once as an educated gentleman. And my family, thank Heaven, is not a pig-headed Tory one. We are Whigs, and believe in liberty. Let snobbish people say what they please. Barbara shall marry, not the man they like, but the man I like.

When Stephen points out that Cusins is not extravagant, and Barbara and he will not require much money, Lady Britomart retorts :

> Dont be too sure of that, Stephen. I know your quiet, simple, refined, poetic people like Adolphus : quite content with the best of everything ! They cost more than your extravagant people, who are always as mean as they are

second rate. No : Barbara will need at least pounds 2,000 a year. You see it means two additional households.

Stephen Advised to Get Married

Lady Britomart advises her son. Stephen, to get married soon. She does not approve of the present fashion of philandering bachelors and late marriages. She tells her son that she is trying to arrange something for him. But Stephen retorts that he would better arrange that for himself But Lady Britomart points out that he is too young to begin matchmaking : he would be taken in by some pretty little nobody. She further says that when Stephen marries, money will also have to be found for him so that he may set up his own household She cannot keep four families in four separate houses. She informs Stephen :

> You know how poor my father is : he has barely seven thousand a year now ; and really, if he were not the Earl of Stevenage, he would have to give up society. He can do nothing for us. He says, naturally enough, that it is absurd that he should be asked to provide for the children of a man who is rolling in money. You see Stephen, your father must be fabulously wealthy, because there is always a war going on somewhere.

The Undershaft Business and Power

Stephen tells his mother that she need not remind him of that. He informs his mother that he has hardly opened a newspaper in his life without seeing their name (that is Undershaft) in it :

> The Undershaft torpedo ! The Undershaft quick firers ! The Undershaft ten inch ! the Undershaft disappearing rampart gun ! the Undershaft submarine ! and the Undershaft aerial battleship ! At Harrow they called me the Woolwich Infant. At Cambridge it was the same. A little brute at King's who was always trying to get up revivals, spoilt my Bible—your first birthday present to me—by writing under my name, "Son and heir to Undershaft and Lazarus, Death and Destruction Dealers : address, Christendom and Judea." But that was not so bad as the way I was kowtowed to everywhere because my father was making millions by selling cannons.

To this Lady Britomart adds that it is not only the cannons, but the war loans that Lazarus arranges under cover of giving credit for the cannons. She thinks it is scandalous ; those two men, Andrew Undershaft and Lazarus, positively have Europe under their thumbs.

That is why Undershaft is able to behave as he does. He is above the law. She asks Stephen :

> Do you think Bismark or Gladstone or Disraeli could have openly defied every social and moral obligation all their lives as your father has ? They simply wouldnt have dared. I asked Gladstone to take it up. I asked *The Times* to take it up. I asked the Lord Chamberlain to take it up. But it was just like asking them to declare war on the Sultan. They wouldnt. They said they couldnt touch him. I believe they are afraid.

The Tradition of Making Foundling a Heir

When Stephen asks what could anybody do when he (his father) does not actually break the law, Lady Britomart retorts that Undershaft is always breaking the law. "He broke the law when he was born : his parents were not married." This surprises and shocks Stephen, and he thinks that perhaps Undershaft married his mother without informing her about this. But Lady Britomart informs Stephen that she knew everything about Undershaft at the time of marriage : "Besides, you know the Undershaft motto : Unashamed. Everybody knew."

Lady Britomart goes on to tell Stephen as to why they separated: "Because he was not content with being a foundling himself : he wanted to disinherit you for another foundling. That was what I couldnt stand." This further embarrasses Stephen. He asks his mother :

> For Heaven's sake either treat me as a child, as you always do, and tell me nothing at all ; or tell me everything and let me take it as best I can.

To this Lady Britomart retorts that she has never treated any of them as children. She has always made them her companions and friends, and allowed them perfect freedom to do and say whatever they liked, so long as they liked what she could approve of.

Then Lady Britomart tells Stephen about the Undershaft tradition of making a foundling a heir :

> The Undershafts are descended from a foundling in the parish of St. Andrew Undershaft in the city. That was long ago, in the reign of James the First. Well, this foundling was adopted by an armorer and gun-maker. In the course of time the foundling succeeded to the business ; and from some notion of gratitude, or some vow or something, he adopted another foundling. and left the business to him. And that foundling did the same. Ever since that, the cannon business has always been left to an adopted foundling named Andrew Undershaft.

Lady Britomart further informs Stephen that the Undershafts married and had legitimate children and left them well provided for. But they always adopted and trained some foundling to succeed them in the business: and of course they always quarrelled with their wives over it. Stephen's father was adopted in that way; and he pretends to consider himself bound to keep up the tradition and adopt somebody to leave the business to.

Undershaft's Religion of Wrongness : The Cause of Separation

Stephen feels that it was on his account that her mother's home-life was broken up But Lady Britomart says that there were other differences. Undershaft not only did wrong things, but he said them and thought them : that was what was so dreadful. "He really had a sort of religion of wrongness."

> Just as one doesn't mind men practising immorality so long as they own that they are in the wrong by preaching morality; so I couldnt forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality. You would all have grown up without principles, without any knowledge of right and wrong, if he had been in the house. You know, my dear, your father was a very attractive man in some ways Children did not dislike him; and he took advantage of it to put the wickedest ideas into their heads, and make them quite unmanageable. I did not dislike him myself: very far from it; but nothing can bridge over moral disagreement.

Stephen feels that people cannot differ about right and wrong. "Right is right; and wrong is wrong; and if a man cannot distinguish them properly, he is either a fool or a rascal : thats all." Lady Britomart is pleased with this answer. She pats Stephen's cheek.

Lady Britomart's Concern For More Money

Lady Britomart then asks for Stephen's advice. Stephen is disgusted with his father making money in such a scandalous manner. He would not take money from him. He would rather go and live in some cheap place like Bedford Square or even Hampstead than take a farthing of his (Andrew Undershaft) money. Stephen is further shocked when his mother tells him that the money on which they have been living comes from his father. The money was settled when they separated. At the moment it is not the moral question of taking money from him or not, but the question is as to how much more they should try to get from him. Lady Britomart points out that she does not want money for herself but for the children who must be

married and settled in life. Stephen is of the opinion that they must not accept any more of his money, but Lady Britomart is determined to ask for more money, and if Stephen does not help her in the matter, then she would herself ask him. Her father also agrees with her. Therefore for this purpose she has asked Andrew Undershaft to come here and see the girls ; he has to come there that evening at nine. Stephen is amazed at the news.

The Girls and Their Lovers Called In

It is ten minutes to nine. Lady Britomart calls her daughters and their lovers so that Andrew may see them. She is sure that her children will obey her. But she is not sure about Barbara. She tells Stephen :

> I dont know how Barbara will take it. Ever since they made her a major in the Salvation Army she has developed a propensity to have her own way and order people about which quite cows me sometime. It's not ladylike : I'm sure I dont know where she picked it up. Anyhow, Barbara shant bully me ; but still it's just as well that your father should be here before she has time to refuse to meet him or make a fuss. Dont look nervous, Stephen : it will only encourage Barbara to make difficulties. I am nervous enough, goodness knows ; but I dont shew it.

The Personalities of the Children

Sarah and Barbara come in with their respective young men. Charles Lomax and Adolphus Cusins. Sarah is slender, bored and mundane. Barbara is robuster, jollier, much more energetic. Sarah is fashionably dressed : Barbara is in the Salvation Army uniform. Lomax, a young man about town, is like many other young men about town. Cusins is a spectacled student, slight, slim thin haired, and sweet voiced. His sense of humour is intellectual and subtle, and is complicated by an appalling temper. He is a most implacable, determined, tenacious, intolerant person who by mere force of character presents himself as—and indeed actually is—considerate, gentle, explanatory, even mild and apologetic, capable possibly of murder, but not of cruelty or coarseness. He is bent on marrying Barbara. Lomax likes Sarah and wants to marry her.

The Comic Interlude

As soon as Barbara comes in, she asks her mother if Cholly and Dolly are to come in. Lady Britomart rebukes Barbara for calling Charles as Cholly and Cusins as Dolly. The children are stupefied to learn that their father is coming that very evening to meet them, and that he is expected any moment. Charles Lomax

provides much fun by his constant use of slangs, for which Lady Britomart rebukes him. Barbara has no objection to the visit of her father, because her father has a soul to be saved like anybody else. Similarly, Sarah and Cusins also have no objection. But when Charles Lomax is asked, he chuckles and says : "I wonder how the old man will take it." Lady Britomart retorts : "Much as the old woman will, no doubt, Charles." Lomax is abashed. He says that he didnt mean anything Lady Britomart sarcastically points out : "You didnt think, Charles. You never do ; and the result is, you never mean anything." She advises Charles and others that they should be good and that they should not pair off into opposite corners and giggle and whisper while she is speaking to their father. Barbara assures her mother that they will do credit to her. Lady Britomart again advises Charles :

> Remember, Charles, that Sarah will want to feel proud of you instead of ashamed of you.

Lomax retorts :

> Oh I say ! theres nothing to be exactly proud of, dont you know.

Lady Britomart adds sarcastically :

> Well, try and look as if there was.

Undershaft Arrives

At this point of time Andrew Undershaft comes in. All rise. Andrew is a stoutish, easy-going elderly man, with kindly patient manners, and an engaging simplicity of character. But he has a watchful, deliberate, waiting, listening face, and formidable reserves of power, both bodily and mental. His gentleness is partly that of a strong man who has learnt by experience that his natural grip hurts ordinary people unless he handles them very carefully, and partly the mellowness of age and success. He is also a little shy in his present very delicate situation.

At first Andrew Undershaft fails to recognise his son and daughters He thinks that Lomax and Cusins are also his children and that he has five instead of three children. Obviously his memory has played him false Lady Britomart soon sets him right. He is introduced to his daughters and their respective lovers, and to his son Undershaft does not know how to conduct himself in the given circumstances. He tells Lomax :

> My difficulty is that if I play the part of a father, I shall produce the effect of an intrusive stranger ; and if I play the part of a discreet stranger, I may appear a callous father.

But Lady Britomart snubs him and advises him that he should not play any part at all, but be sincere and natural.

Undershaft Impresses Everybody

Lady Britomart snubs Charles Lomax and asks him to behave. But Barbara adds that Charles should laugh if he wants to ; it is good for his inside. Lady Britomart snubs Barbara also : "Barbara : you have had the education of a lady. Please let your father see that ; and dont talk like a street girl." Undershaft points out : "Never mind me, my dear. As you know, I am not a gentleman ; and I was never educated." Lomax retorts that nobody would know it, and that he (Undershaft) looks alright. To this Cusins adds his own advice :

> Let me advise you to study Greek, Mr. Undershaft. Greek scholars are privileged men. Few of them know Greek : and none of them knows anything else ; but their position is unchangeable. Other languages are the qualifications of waiters and commercial travellers : Greek is to a man of position what the hallmark is to silver.

In order to change the topic, Barbara asks Lomax to fetch his concertina and play something upon it. Undershaft likes the idea and says that he is very fond of music. He takes keen interest in the Salvation Army. When Barbara points out that she made Charles come yesterday to a meeting at the dock gates, and take the collection in his hat, Undershaft looks askance at his wife. Lady Britomart says that it is not her doing. Barbara is old enough to take her own way. She has no father to advise her. But Barbara retorts that she has a father ; there are no orphans in the Salvation Army.

Undershaft then points out that the motto of the Salvation Army might be his own : Blood and Fire. He says "My sort of blood cleanses : my sort of fire purifies." Barbara invites her father to her shelter—the West Ham shelter—and see what they are doing. She tells him that they are going to march to a great meeting in the Assembly Hall at a Mile End, and asks him to come and march with them. Then she asks him if he can play anything ? Undershaft replies that in his youth he earned pennies, and even shillings occasionally in the streets and in public house parlours by his natural talent for stepdancing. Later on, he became a member of the Undershaft orchestral society, and performed on the tenor of trombone. Barbara points out that many a sinner has played himself into heaven on the trombone, thanks to the Army.

Undershaft's Realism and Justification of War

This leads to a discussion of the moral aspects of the cannon business. Undershaft is a realist who is not at all apologetic abou

the business on which he thrives. Lomax points out that the cannon business may be necessary, but it is not right. On the other hand, there may be a certain amount of tosh about the Salvation Army, but still it is religion ; and one cannot go against religion, unless one is downright immoral. Undershaft feels sorry that Lomax does not appreciate his position. He informs him that he (Undershaft) is a profiteer in mutilation and murder :

> I find myself in a specially amiable humour just now because, this morning, down at the foundry, we blew twenty-seven dummy soldiers into fragments with a gun which formerly destroyed only thirteen.

This encourages Lomax to remark that the more destructive war becomes, the sooner it will be abolished. But Undershaft tells Lomax that it is not so :

> The more destructive war becomes the more fascinating we find it. No, Mr. Lomax : I am obliged to you for making the usual excuse for my trade ; but I am not ashamed of it. I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in water-tight compartments. All the spare money my trade rivals spend on hospitals, cathedrals, and other receptacles for conscience money, I devote to experiments and researches in improved methods of destroying life and property. I have always done so, and I always shall. Therefore your Christmas card moralities of peace on earth and goodwill among men are of no use to me. Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. My morality—my religion—must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.

When Stephen remarks that it appears as if there were half a dozen moralities and religions to choose from, instead of one true morality and one true religion, Undershaft points out that for him there is only one true morality. "There is only one true morality for every man ; but every man has not the same true morality."

Lomax does not understand the idea behind these words. Cusins explains : "As Euripides says, one man's meat is another man's poison morally as well as physically."

The Bargain

Stephen points out that some men are honest and some are scoundrels, and Undershaft asks if there are no good men ? Barbara replies that there are neither good men nor scoundrels : there are just children of one Father ; and the sooner they stop calling one

another names the better. She further tells that she has had scores of them through her hands; scoundrels, criminals, infidels, philanthropists, missionaries, county councillors, all sorts. They are all just the same sort of sinners; and there is the same salvation ready for them all.

Then a bargain is struck between Undershaft and Barbara :

Undershaft : If I go to see you tomorrow in your Salvation Centre, will you come the day after to see me in my cannon works ?

Barbara : Take care. It may end in your giving up the cannons for the sake of the Salvation Army.

Undershaft : Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the cannons ?

Barbara : I will take my chance of that.

Undershaft : And I will take my chance of the other. (*They shake hands on it*). Where is your shelter ?

Barbara : In West Ham. At the sign of the cross. Ask anybody in Canning Town. Where are your works ?

Undershaft : In Perivale St. Andrews. At the sign of the sword. Ask anybody in Europe.

Undershaft Wins Over the Affection of the Children

The concertina is now brought in and they go into the drawing room to enjoy the music of the concertina and the trombone. This shocks Lady Britomart who wants all the children to stay in the room and pray. She asks Cusins to stay. Cusins says : "My dear Lady Brit : there are things in the family prayer book that I couldnt bear to hear you say." When Lady Britomart asks as to what does he mean, Cusins replies :

> Well, you would have to say before all the servants that we have done things we ought not to have done, and left undone things we ought to have done. and that there is no health in us. I cannot bear to hear you doing yourself such an injustice, and Barbara such an injustice. As for myself, I flatly deny it : I have done my best. I shouldnt dare to marry Barbara—I couldnt look you in the face—if it were true. So I must go to the drawing room.

Similarly Lomax, Sarah and Barbara also go to the drawing room with their father to enjoy the music. Lady Britomart is left in tears. She tells Stephen :

> A woman has to bring up her children ; and that means to restrain them, to deny them things they want, to set them tasks, to punish them when they do wrong, to do all the unpleasant things. And then the father, who has nothing to do but pet them and spoil them, comes in when all her work is done and steals their affection from her.

Lady Britomart also gets up and goes to the drawing room. Stephen is left behind sitting on the settee, with compressed lips and an expression of strong dislike.

ACT II

The Setting

The scene now shifts to the West Ham shelter of the Salvation Army. As the curtain rises we see a man and a woman sitting on the table having a meal of bread – on thick slice each, with margarine and golden syrup—and diluted milk. The man is a workman out of employment. He is young and agile. The woman "is a commonplace old bundle of poverty and hard-worn humanity." She looks sixty and probably is forty-five. Through their conversation we come to know that the man's name is Snobby Price, and that he is a painter by profession.

Snobby Price : A Representative of the London Poor

Snobby Price considers himself to be a real painter. But his present state of affairs is because of various reasons. Firstly, he is very intelligent, and the employers do not like a man that sees through them. Secondly, an intelligent man wants to have his share of happiness, and so he drinks whenever he gets a chance. Thirdly, he works as little as possible so that other fellow-painters may get jobs. Fourthly, he always keeps within the limits of the law, as do the capitalists, and does not hesitate to steal when he can do so remaining within the limits of the law. And finally, in the proper state of the society he is sober, industrious and honest : "in Rome, so to speak, I do as the Romans do," but when there is retrenchment, he is first to be retrenched.

Rummy Mitchens

The woman's name is Rummy Mitchens. Rummy is short for Romola She is a respectable married woman, but she pretended to be wicked so that she could be rescued and saved by the Salvation Army. If she had not declared herself a wicked woman, she would not have enjoyed the charity of the Salvation Army and would have starved.

Salvation Army Hoodwinked

Both Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens are companions in misfortune. Snobby Price has come there on his own. He intends

to tell them that he is a wicked man who gambled and beat his old mother (though in reality it was his mother who used to beat him), so that they may believe that he is "converted" and "saved", and may continue to get their charity. Rummy tells Snobby Price sarcastically that his confessions are just as big lies as hers, but men can tell their lies right at the meetings and made much of for it, whereas the sort of confessions women have to make have to be whispered to one lady at a time. Even that is not right in spite of their piety. It is in this way that religion is abused and misused. Shaw is thus exposing the hypocrisy as much prevalent among the poor as among the rich.

Peter Shirley

Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Jenny Hill, a pale, overwrought, pretty Salvation lass of eighteen, who comes in through the yard gate, leading Peter Shirley, a half hardened, half worn-out elderly man, weak with hunger. Snobby Price takes the old man off Jenny's hands, and cheers him up, and asks Jenny to bring some food for him. Shirley is not an old man. He is only forty six But as he has a few white hair he has been thrown out of his job. He has been working ten to twelve hours a day since he was thirteen, and now he has been thrown into the gutter and his job given to a young man. He tells Snobby Price :

> I'm not an old man. I'm only 46. I'm as good as ever I was. The grey patch come in my hair before I was thirty. All it wants is three pennorth o hair dye : am I to be turned on the streets to starve for it ? Holy God ! Ive worked ten to twelve hours a day since I was thirteen, and paid my way all through ; and now am I to be thrown into the gutter and my job given to a young man that can do it no better than me because Ive black hair that goes white at the first change ?

When food is brought to him he does not want to take it, because never did he take any charity. He is however persuaded to accept it when Jenny suggests that he can pay for the food when he gets a job. So he accepts food only as a loan and starts eating it ravenously.

Bill Walker

Rummy thanks Jenny for having fed her (Rummy) body and saved her soul. Then there comes Bill Walker, a rough young man of about twenty-five. He looks malevolently at Jenny Hill. She is hurrying to the shelter, when he moves quickly up to the door and intercepts her. She retreats as he comes at her threateningly. He is angry with Jenny Hill, because it is she who has taken away his girl from him. He would thrash his girl and teach her what it means to run away from him. If Jenny does not bring her to him

immediately, he will also thrash her (Jenny Hill). Saying this, he takes Jenny by the arm and pushes her towards the door of the shelter. She falls down on her hand and knee. Rummy helps her up again.

When Snobby comes to her help, Bill Walker threatens to beat him too. When Rummy scolds him and calls him a brute, he strikes her violently on the face. She screams and reels back to the trough, where she sits down, covering her bruised face with her hand. He threatens Jenny again, and challenges Snobby to a fight. Snobby retreats saying that Jenny is nothing to him and so he does not intend to take her part. He asks Jenny to bring his girl Mog Habbijam, otherwise he will knock her face off. Jenny is writhing in pain in his grasp. Price and Rummy flee into the shelter in terror. He strikes Jenny with his fist in the face. She, crying with pain, goes into the shed.

When Bill Walker advances threateningly towards Shirley, he faces him boldly with the mug in his hand. Shirley tells him that he will smash his face with the mug and cut his eye out if he took liberty with him. He calls Bill a coward who strikes old men and helpless young women. He snubs him :

> As good as you and better. I'll do a day's work agen you or any fat young soaker of your age. Go and take my job at Horrockses, where I worked for ten years. They want young men there : they cant afford to keep men over forty-five. Theyre very sorry—give you a character and happy to help you to get anything suited to your years—sure a steady man wont be long out of a job. Well, let em try you. Theyll find the differ. What do you know ? Not as much as how to beeyave yourself—layin your dirty fist across the mouth of a respectable woman !

Shirley challenges him to fight his son-in-law's brother, Todger Fairmile, a wrestler. Shirley looks down on Bill with disdain. He would have fought with him himself if he had a week's feeding in him instead of two months' starvation. Shirley then tells him that he is in for a big trouble, that Major Barbara is the grand-daughter of the Earl of Stevenage, and that if the matter is reported to the police, nobody would believe him as against her. This frightens Bill and he becomes uneasy and sulks into a corner of the shed.

Barbara's Encounter With Bill

Barbara, brisk and business-like, comes from the shelter with a note-book. First she addresses herself to Shirley and notes down his name, address and trade. She consoles him by saying that they can always find a job for a steady man like him. Then she turns to Bill and asks him his name and address. Bill tells her insolently that

it is none of her business to know his name. But when Barbara tells him that perhaps he is afraid to give his name, for he must be the man who hit Jenny on the face. Bill says that he is not afraid in the least and tells his name. Barbara then tells him that at that very moment Jenny is praying for him. This irritates Bill and he says that he does not believe in God. Barbara then points out : "Youre a brave man," Mr. Walker. It takes some pluck to do our work here ; but none of us dare lift our hand against a girl like that, for fear of her father in heaven." Bill says that he has not come there to beg for food like others. Then Barbara asks him about his trade. Bill replies that that is no concern of hers. Barbara points out : I'll put you down as (*writing*) the man who—struck—poor little Jenny Hill – in the mouth."

He informs Barbara that he has come there in search of his girl, and asks Barbara to produce her. Barbara informs her that Mog Habbijam has gone to Canning Town, to our barracks there and that she has got another lover, Todger Fairmile the wrestler, who is one of her own converts. He fell in love with her when he saw her with her soul saved, and her face clean, and her hair washed. Barbara further informs him that now Mog wears a new look in her eyes. "It's pity youre too late. The bloke has put your nose out of joint, Bill."

Shirley then intervenes and tells Barbara that he will go with Bill : "I want to see them two meet. I'll take him to the infirmary when It's over." Barbara advises Bill to go and talk to Todger, he will convert him. But Shirley retorts he will convert his head into a mashed potato. However, Bill does not go. He resumes his seat.

Barbara then asks Jenny to call Rummy. Rummy is asked to take in those mugs and plates to be washed ; and throw the crumbs about for the birds. Jenny, however, has no complaint against Bill. The behaviour of both Barbara and Jenny has its impact on Bill, and it is obvious that his soul is troubled, and he is not his usual self.

Undershaft Arrives and Talks to Shirley

At this stage Andrew Undershaft arrives and Barbara introduces him to Shirley and others. She tells Shirley that like him her father is also a secularist. Undershaft denies this and says that he is a 'mystic'. Barbara then asks her father :

> By the way, papa, what is your religion ? in case I have to introduce you again.

Undershaft replies :

> My religion ? Well, my dear, I am a Millionaire. That is my religion.

Barbara then points out that in that case Shirley and her father will not be able to comfort one another, since one is a millionaire and the other is penniless. Shirley, however, points out that he is proud of his poverty. Undershaft retorts : "Poverty, my friend, is not a thing to be proud of." Shirley says that people like him have made them (people like Undershaft) rich and they themselves remain poor. He may be poor but his conscience does not suffer from any sense of guilt. Shirley says : "I wouldnt have your conscience, not for all your income." To this Undershaft retorts :

> I wouldnt have your income, not for all your conscience, Mr. Shirley.

Shirley wants to retort but Barbara stops him and asks him to go in and help the girls in their work. Shirley feels bitter and says : "Yes : I'm in their debt for a meal, aint I ?" Barbara replies : "Oh, not because youre in their debt, but for love of them, Peter, for love of them. (*He cannot understand, and is rather scandalized*). There ! dont stare at me. In with you ; and give that conscience of yours a holiday."

Barbara Works on Bill

Undershaft asks Barbara as to what is the matter with that man, pointing out towards Bill. Barbara says that she will cure him in no time. She goes to Bill and then says : "It would be nice to just stamp on Mog Habbijam's face, wouldnt it, Bill ?" Bill points out that it is a lie, he never said so. He asks Barbara as to who told her what was in his mind ? Barbara says that his new friend, the devil "when he gets round people they get miserable, just like you." Bill says that he is not miserable. Barbara asks him that if he is happy then why does he not look happy ? On this Bill asks Barbara to leave him alone ; he has done nothing to her, has not smashed her face. Barbara, wooing his soul, further points out that it is not she that is getting at him, but somebody or something that wants to make a man of him, that does not intend him to smash women's faces. There is a man in him somewhere. But why did he (man) let him hit poor little Jenny Hill ? That was not very manly of him. Bill feels tormented. Barbara tells Bill that he has not any heart. A man with a heart would not have bashed poor little Jenny's face. Bill is on the point of crying. He implores before Barbara that he should be left alone. Bill suffers from a deep spiritual anguish, because he has realised the wrong he has done to Jenny Hill.

Cusins and Bill Walker

Adolphus Cusins now arrives with his drum and Major Barbara introduces him to Bill. When Bill comes to know that Cusins is going to marry her, he advises him not to marry Barbara, for in that case he will have to stand her tongue and will soon be worn out and die. He himself has not been able to stand it for one morning. So he is going away to Canning Town. He will let Todger Fairmile hit him in the face. In this way he will atone for the wrong he has done to Jenny Hill. But Barbara points out :

> Two black eyes wont make one white one, Bill.

Cusins adds that Bill is right. It is exactly what an ancient Greek would have done.

Bill goes away advising Cusins to stop the mouth of his girl, otherwise she would kill him with her talkative tongue. Cusins seems to agree with Bill and feels it is very wearing to be in love with Barbara and that he would die young He then, kisses her over the drum, evidently not for the first time, as people cannot kiss over a big drum without practice.

Undershaft and Cusins

Undershaft and Cusins are left alone to talk together as Barbara goes in to attend to her work. Each looks hard at the other for some time, when Undershaft asks Cusins : "But suppose Barbara finds you out." Cusins replies :

> You know, I do not admit that I am imposing on Barbara. I am quite genuinely interested in the views of the Salvation Army. The fact is, I am a sort of collector of religions ; and the curious thing is that I find I can believe them all. By the way, have you any religion ?

Undershaft replies that there are two things necessary to Salvation—"Money and gunpowder." This is his religion. Cusins is surprised, but interested. He asks Undershaft if there is any place in his religion for honour, justice, truth, love, mercy and so on. Undershaft replies that they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life. If one has to choose between them and money and gunpowder, then one should choose money and gunpowder, for without enough of both one cannot afford the others.

When Cusins says that Barbara will not stand that, and that he will have to choose between his religion and Barbara, Undershaft retorts that he (Cusins) will have to do the same thing, for Barbara will soon find out that that drum of his is hollow. To this Cusins replies that he (Undershaft) is mistaken :

> I am a sincere Salvationist. You do not understand the Salvation Army. It is the army of joy, of love, of courage : it has banished the fear and remorse and despair of the old hell-ridden evangelical sects : it marches to fight the devil with trumpet and drum, with music and dancing, with banner and palm, as becomes a sally from heaven by its happy garrison. It picks the waster out of the public house and makes a man of him : it finds a worm wriggling in a back kitchen, and lo ! a woman ! Men and women of rank too, sons and daughters of the Highest. It takes the poor professor of Greek, the most artificial and self-suppressed of human creatures, from his meal of roots, and lets loose the rhapsodist in him; reveals the true worship of Dionysos to him; sends him down the public street drumming dithyrambs.

Cusins's Determination

Cusins then reminds Undershaft of what Euripides has written about "money and gunpowder," and recites certain verses from the Greek poet. He says that one man may surpass another in money and gunpowder, but one who knows that "to live is happy, has found his heaven." He further says that God is lovely and "shall not loveliness be loved for ever." Euripides had written "loveliness", but Cusins changes it to Barbara : "And shall not Barbara be loved for ever." When Undershaft asks :

> May I ask—as Barbara's father—how much a year she is to be loved for ever on ?

Cusins replies that as Barbara's father it is his affair ; he (Cusins) can feed her by teaching Greek ; that is about all.

When Undershaft asks if he considers it a good match for her, Cusins replies :

> Mr. Undershaft : I am in many ways a weak, timid, ineffectual person ; and my health is far from satisfactory. But whenever I feel that I must have anything, I get it, sooner or later. I feel that way about Barbara. I dont like marriage : I feel intensely afraid of it; and I dont know what I shall do with Barbara or what she will do with me. But I feel that I and nobody else must marry her. Please regard that as settled. Not that I wish to be arbitrary ; but why should I waste your time in discussing what is inevitable ?

Undershaft admires his determination and declares : "Professor Cusins · You are a young man after my own heart." Undershaft asks him to shake hands as a sign of their friendship. Cusins shakes hands with him but not before telling him :

> Mr. Undershaft : you are, as far as I am able to gather, a most infernal old rascal ; but you appeal very strongly to my sense of ironic humour.

Undershaft and Cusins Discuss Religion

Undershaft suddenly suggests that they should now talk about business. But when Cusins points out that they are discussing religion, Undershaft retorts that religion is their business at present, because it is through religion alone that they can win Barbara. Cusins points out that the power Barbara wields there—the power that wields Barbara herself—is not Calvinism, not Presbyterianism, not Methodism, not even Greek Paganism, but Barbara is quite original in her religion. Undershaft is excited :

> It is the Undershaft inheritance. I shall hand on my torch to my daughter. She shall make my converts and preach my gospel.

Undershaft thinks that Barbara will preach his gospel of money and gunpowder, of freedom and power, of command of life and command of death. This makes Cusins remark that Undershaft is mad. He asks : "Can a madman make cannons ?" Undershaft replies : "Would anyone else than a madman make them." Then Undershaft calls Cusins a madman, and asks him : "Can a sane man translate Euripides ?" Cusins says no. Undershaft again asks : "Can a sane woman make a man of a waster or a woman of a worm ?" Cusins points, that he means Barbara is as mad as they are. He calls Undershaft "Father Colossus"—"Mammoth Millionaire".

Poverty Discussed

Undershaft remarks that they should call things by proper names :

> I am a millionaire ; you are a poet ; Barbara is a saviour of souls. What have we three to do with the common mob of slaves and idolaters ?

Cusins points out :

> Take care! Barbara is in love with the common people. So am I. Have you never felt the romance of that love ?

Undershaft is cold and sardonic in his comments :

> Have you ever been in love with Poverty, like St Francis ? Have you ever been in love with Dirt, like St Simeon ! Have you ever been in love with disease and suffering, like our nurses and philanthropists ? Such passions are not

virtues, but the most unnatural of all the vices. This love of the common people may please an earl's grand-daughter and a university professor ; but I have been a common man and a poor man ; and it has no romance for me. Leave it to the poor to pretend that poverty is a blessing : leave to the coward to make a religion of his cowardice by preaching humility : we know better than that. We three must stand together above the common people : how else can we help their children to climb up beside us ? Barbara must belong to us, not to the Salvation Army ?

Undershaft is determined to get Barbara out of the Salvation Army, and since he cannot purchase her he will purchase the Army.

Shavian Views on Religion, Poverty, Socialism, etc.

The following conversation between Undershaft and Cusins throws light on Shaw's views on religion, poverty, socialism, etc , and also brings out his gift of trenchent phrasing :

Cusins : (*in a white fury*). Do I understand you to imply that you can buy Barbara ?

Undershaft : No ; but I can buy the Salvation Army.

Cusins : Quite impossible.

Undershaft : You shall see. All religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich.

Cusins : Not the Army. That is the Church of the poor.

Undershaft : All the more reason for buying it.

Cusins : I dont think you quite know what the Army does for the poor.

Undershaft : Oh yes I do. It draws their teeth : that is enough for me as a man of business.

Cusins : Nonsense ! It makes them sober—

Undershaft : I prefer sober workmen. The profits are larger.

Cusins : honest—

Undershaft : Honest workmen are the most economical.

Cusins : —attached to their homes—

Undershaft : So much the better: they will put up with anything sooner than change their shop.

Cusins : —happy—

Undershaft : An invaluable safeguard against revolution.

Cusins : —unselfish—

Undershaft : Indifferent to their own interests, which suits me exactly.

Cusins : —with their thoughts on heavenly things—

Undershaft : (*rising*). And not on Trade Unionism nor Socialism. Excellent.

Cusins : (*revolted*). You really are an infernal old rascal.

Barbara's Religious Idealism

Barbara, Snobby Price and Jenny Hill now return from their big meeting at the end of Cripps Lane. Snobby's confession that he beat his old mother frequently moved the audience and the collection amounted to "Four and ten pence". They lack only two pence to make it a round sum of five shillings. Barbara remarks that if Snobby had given his poor mother just one more kick, they would have got the whole five shillings—here Shaw seems to be mocking with his tongue in his cheek. Undershaft offers to contribute the odd two pence, the 'millionaire's mite'. But Barbara refuses to accept his money, since he has earned his money by selling cannons, torpedoes, submarines, etc. Barbara remarks :

> There is bad blood on your hands; and nothing but good blood can cleanse them. Money is no use. Take it away.

Barbara tells her father that he must work for his salvation ; he cannot buy it for two pence. Barbara's major concern at the moment is money. Without money they cannot keep their shelter going. She wants to convert people to save their souls, but she has to think more of money than of their souls. She says :

> I am getting at last to think more of the collection than of the people's souls. And what are those hatfuls of pence and half-pence ? We want thousands ! tens of thousands ! hundreds of thousands ! I want to convert people, not to be always begging for the Army in a way I'd die sooner than beg for myself.

Undershaft ironically remarks that genuine unselfishness is capable of anything, and Cusins who understands the irony calls Undershaft "Mephistopheles! Machiavelli!" Barbara almost breaks down under the weight of difficulties, for they cant talk religion to a man with bodily hunger in his eyes.

Bill Walker Returns: His Repentance

Bill Walker now returns. He is dejected and morose. He reveals that he has been used as a carpet by Todger Fairmile, who prayed for his salvation. He feels sorry for having struck Jenny Hill He feels guilty conscience He wishes to atone for his guilt by paying money. He throws a sovereign down on an upturned drum, hoping to discharge his debt and gain peace of mind by so doing. But Barbara still maintains that Army is not to be bought. She tells Bill: "We want your soul, Bill; and we'll take nothing less." Undershaft intervenes and suggests that if Barbara sets Bill's mind at ease by taking his pound, he will give the other ninety-nine to make the sum a hundred pounds, with which she can do a great deal of good. But Barbara once again emphasises that the Army is not for sale. She tells Bill:

> Youll never have another quiet moment, Bill, until you come round to us. You cant stand out against your salvation.

Bill says that he can do no more. She may take the money or leave it. The coin fascinates Snobby Price, who takes an early opportunity of dropping his cap on it, and later in the Act he steals it.

Undershaft Purchases the Army

Mrs. Baines, the General of the Army, now arrives, and Barbara introduces her to her father. After this Barbara leaves leaving Mrs. Baines and Undershaft together. Mrs Baines complains that for want of money they cannot carry their work through the length and breadth of the land, and that the nation does not appreciate the good work they are doing. Mrs Baines tells Undershaft that there is wide-spread starvation, and it is their work alone which is preventing the poor from rioting as they did in 1886, when they broke the windows of the clubs of the rich in Pall Mall, and the Mansion House Fund went up the next day from thirty thousand pounds to seventy-nine thousand. Undershaft appreciates the work the Salvation Army is doing and considers their work as most "convenient and gratifying to all large employers of labor."

In the meantime Rummy comes and informs Snobby Price that his mother is asking for him at the other gate in Cripps's Lane. But he cannot face her. He sends the message that she will find her son at home. He skulks off through the gate, incidentally

stealing the sovereign on his way out by *picking up his cap from* the drum.

A moment later Mrs. Baines makes an announcement that Lord Saxmundham has promised them five thousand pounds provided five other gentlemen will give a thousand each to make the sum up to ten thousand. Undershaft informs Barbara that Lord Saxmundham is Sir Horace Bodger, who is a distiller and manufactures Bodger's whisky. Undershaft points out that Bodger is one of the greatest public benefactors. He restored the cathedral at Hakington. They made him a baronet for that. He gave half a million to the funds of his party: they made him a baron for that. Now he has given the five thousand in order to save his soul.

Mrs. Baines requests Undershaft to help them get the other five thousand pounds, since he has some very rich friends. Undershaft immediately promises the other five thousands. Mrs. Baines is extremely happy. Undershaft writes the cheque so that Mrs. Baines may show it to the people at their great meeting that afternoon in the Assembly Hall in the Mile End Road.

Barbara Astonished and Disillusioned

Barbara is astonished. She protests that the money of Bodger and Undershaft is tainted and should not be accepted.

> Have you forgotten that Lord Saxmundham is Bodger the whisky man? Do you remember how we implored the County Council to stop him from writing Bodger's whisky in letters of fire against the sky; so that the poor drink-ruined creatures on the Embankment could not wake up from their snatches of sleep without being reminded of their deadly thirst of that wicked sky again? Do you know that the worst thing I have had to fight here is not the devil, but Bodger, Bodger, Bodger, with his whisky, his distilleries, and his tied houses? Are you going to make our shelter another tied house for him, and ask me to keep it?

Mrs. Baines remarks that Bodger has a soul to be saved. It is heaven that has found the way to make a good use of his money. Undershaft in an ironic tone tells Barbara that alcohol is a very necessary article. It heals the sick; it assists the doctor:

> It makes life bearable to millions of people who could not endure their existence if they were quite sober. It enables Parliament to do things at eleven at night that no sane person would do at eleven in the morning. Is it Bodger's fault that this inestimable gift is deplorably abused by less than one per cent of the poor?

Mrs. Baines also tries to convince Barbara that there is no harm in accepting the money. She says:

> **Barbara : Will there be less drinking or more if all those poor souls we are saving come tomorrow and find the doors of our shelters shut in their faces ? Lord Saxmundham gives us the money to stop drinking—to take his own business from him.**

Cusins also admires the self-sacrifice on Bodger's part. Barbara almost breaks down as Adolphus, too, fails her.

Undershaft's Disinterestedness

Undershaft tells Mrs. Baines that he may also claim a little disinterestedness. He says :

> Think of my business ! think of the widows and orphans ! the men and lads torn to pieces with shrapnel and poisoned with lyddite ! *(Mrs Baines shrinks ; but he goes on remorselessly)* the oceans of blood, not one drop of which is shed in a really just cause ! the ravaged crops ! the peaceful peasants forced, women and men, to till their fields under the fire of opposing armies on pain of starvation ! the bad blood of the fierce little cowards at home who egg on others to fight for the gratification of their national vanity ! All this makes money for me : I am never richer, never busier than when the papers are full of it. Well, it is your work to preach peace on earth and goodwill to men. *(Mrs Baines's face lights up again)* Every convert you make is a vote against war. *(Her lips move in prayer)* Yet I give you this money to help you to hasten my own commercial ruin.

Undershaft tears the cheque and gives it to Mrs. Baines. Cusins, in an ecstasy of mischief, remarks : "The millennium will be inaugurated by the unselfishness of Undershaft and Bodger. Oh be joyful." He takes the drum-sticks from his pocket and flourishes them.

The Army is Saved

Mrs. Baines appreciates the gesture of Undershaft. She finds an Infinite Goodness that turns everything to the work of salvation sooner or later. She says : "Who would have thought that any good could have come out of war and drink ? And yet their profits are brought today to the feet of salvation to do its blessed work." She invites Undershaft to their great meeting. Barbara will tell the people that the Army is saved. Cusins hands over the trombone to Undershaft to play on it. They sing a chorus and move on towards the meeting.

Barbara's Anguish

Major Barbara refuses to go along with them to the great meeting. She removes her badge and pins it on the collar of her father. Mrs. Baines asks her that if she won't come and pray with

them, she will at least pray for them. Barbara replies that she cannot pray now. Perhaps she will never pray again. They march out with immense rejoicing. Undershaft marches out saying "My ducat and my daughter" ; Cusins follows him saying : "Money and gunpowder." As they march, Barbara exclaims : "Drunkenness and Murder ! My God : why hast thou forsaken me ?"

The march passes away into silence. Bill Walker steals across to her and comments ironically : "What price salvation, ah ?" Bill further remarks that Barbara did not take his money since it was not enough. Then he finds that his money has been stolen by Snobby Price. Bill reminds Barbara sarcastically that she wanted his soul, but she could not get it. Barbara replies that she nearly got his soul, but sold it back for ten thousand pounds. She tells Shirley that she is now 'cleaned out' and has lost her job. She promises Shirley to get him a job. She counts her money and finds that it is enough for two teas at Lockharts and tram and bus fare home. She goes out through the gate talking to Shirley.

ACT III

The Setting

The scene now shifts again to Lady Britomart's library in Wilton Crescent. It is the next day after lunch. Lady Britomart is writing at her table. Sarah is reading. Barbara, in ordinary fashionable dress, is pale and brooding. Charles Lomax arrives. He is surprised to see Barbara without her uniform. He sympathises with Barbara, but Lady Britomart asks him to change the subject. Barbara asks him to go "and spoon with Sarah". Cusins also arrives and he is much surprised to find Barbara without her uniform.

Undershaft : The Prince of Darkness

Cusins shocks them all when he tells them that he had a very bad night, that after the meeting he had been drinking in the company of Undershaft, the nominal head of this household, and that he has not yet fully recovered from the hang-over. He got up late and has just had his breakfast, whereas others have finished their lunch. He calls Undershaft "the Prince of Darkness". When Lady Britomart points out that Andrew never used to drink, Cusins informs her that he did not drink. He (Undershaft) only sat there and completed the wreck of his (Cusins) moral basis. He also informs Barbara that he cares for her, and that is what makes him (Undershaft) so dangerous to him (Cusins). But Barbara tells Cusins not to worry about her father at all, for "There are larger

loves and diviner dreams than the fireside ones", and as she is inspired by such dreams she can never be won over by her father.

The Comic Conversation

Barbara then asks Cusins as to what happened at the meeting. Cusins informs her that it was an amazing meeting. Mrs. Baines almost died of emotion. Jenny Hill simply gibbered with hysteria. The Prince of Darkness played his trombone like a madman. 117 conversions took place then and there. All of them prayed for the anonymous donor of the pounds 5000. Undershaft would not let his name be given, for he felt that all the charitable institutions would be down on him like kites on a battle field if he gave his name. Lady Britomart retorts that that is Andrew all over. He never does a proper thing without giving an improper reason for it. Lady Britomart then suggests that since Barbara has left the Salvation Army, Adolphus should leave it too, for she would not like to see him playing that drum in the streets. Cusins informs her that her orders have already been obeyed. Cusins also informs Barbara that though he is a collector of religions, yet he had joined the Salvation Army for her sake. A comic diversion is provided when Charles Lomax remarks that there was a certain amount of tosh about Cusins's drumming and Lady Britomart admonishes him: "Charles: if you must drivel, drivel like a grown-up man and not like a schoolboy." Lomax retorts: "Well, drivel is drivel, dont you know, whatever a man's age." Then Lady Britomart becomes Shaw's mouth-piece when he satirizes the elite of England. Lady Britomart says:

> In good society in England, Charles, men drivel at all ages by repeating silly formulas with an air of wisdom. Schoolboys make their own formulas out of slang, like you. When they reach your age, and get political private secretaryship and things of that sort, they drop slang and get their formulas out of *The Spectator* or *The Times*. You had better confine yourself to *The Times*. You will find that there is a certain amount of tosh about *The Times*; but at least its language is reputable.

Undershaft and Lady Britomart Converse Together

This comic conversation is interrupted with the arrival of Andrew Undershaft who has come to take them to his 'works'. Lady Britomart sends all children out on one pretext or the other so that she may be alone with Undershaft. Lady Britomart starts the conversation and tells Undershaft that Sarah must have pounds 800 a year until Charles Lomax comes into his property. Barbara will need more, and need it permanently, because Adolphus hasn't

any property. Undershaft agrees to this problem. Lady Britomart then talks to him about Stephen. Undershaft says that Stephen does not interest him. He adds in a comic vein :

> He has induced us to bring him into the world ; but he chose his parents very incongruously, I think. I see nothing of myself in him, and less of you.

Lady Britomart tells Undershaft that Stephen is an excellent son, and a most steady, capable, high-minded young man, and he (Undershaft) is simply trying to find an excuse for disinheriting him (Stephen). Undershaft points out that it is the Undershaft tradition that disinherits him. It would be dishonest of him to leave the cannon foundry to his son. However, Lady Britomart is of the view that it would be most unnatural and improper on his part to disinherit his own son. She remarks that Stephen could carry on the foundry just as well as all the other sons of the big business houses. But Undershaft opines that he could learn the office routine without understanding the business, like all the other sons ; and the firm would go on by its own momentum until the real Undershaft—probably an Italian or a German—would invent a new method and cut him out. However, Lady Britomart thinks that there is nothing that any Italian or German could do that Stephen could not do. And Stephen at least has breeding. Undershaft, however, remarks that Stephen is the son of a foundling. But Lady Britomart retorts that Stephen is her son, even there may be good blood in the veins of Undershaft. Undershaft agrees and adds that that is another argument in favour of a foundling. Lady Britomart calls him aggravating and wicked.

Undershaft does not want to break the tradition for the sake of Stephen. He says that if the tradition has ever to be broken it will be for an abler man than Stephen. Then Lady Britomart asks him to go away. She is obviously angry with him.

Undershaft's Problem

But Undershaft does not go away. The Undershaft tradition has landed him in a difficulty. He is getting older, and his partner Lazarus wants and insists that the succession must be settled one way or the other. And all the foundling he can find are exactly like Stephen. He says :

> I want a man with no relations and no schooling ; that is, a man who would be out of the running altogether if he were not a strong man. And I cant find him. Every blessed foundling nowadays is snapped up in his infancy by Barnardo homes, or School Board officers, or Boards of Guardians ; and if he shews the least ability he is

> fastened on by schoolmasters; trained to win scholarships like a racehorse; crammed with secondhand ideas; drilled and disciplined in docility and what they call good taste; and lamed for life so that he is fit for nothing but teaching. If you want to keep the foundry in the family, you had better find an eligible foundling and marry him to Barbara.

Lady Britomart reminds him that it is his duty to make Stephen his successor. But Undershaft remarks that just as much as it is her duty to submit to her husband. He adds:

> Come Biddy! these tricks of the governing class are of no use with me. I am one of the governing class myself; and it is waste of time giving tracts to a missionary. I have power in this matter: and I am not to be humbugged into using it for your purposes.

Undershaft and Stephen

The discussion of the husband and wife is cut short at this point by the arrival of Stephen. Undershaft asks Stephen if he wants to come into the cannon business. Stephen replies that he has no intention of entering any trade, business or enterprise. He intends to devote himself to politics. When Lady Britomart remonstrates with him that he must not throw away an enormous property in that way, Stephen firmly tells her not to treat him as a child anymore. He would discuss the matter further with his father, as it should be discussed between one man and another. Lady Britomart feels repudiated by her son, but she accepts the fact that Stephen is mature enough to understand everything.

Discussion Between Father and Son

The discussion that takes place between the father and the son is so lively and interesting that it is worth-while to quote it entirely:

> Undershaft : It is settled that you do not ask for the succession to the cannon business.
>
> Stephen : I hope it is settled that I repudiate the cannon business.
>
> Undershaft : Come, come! dont be so devilishly sulky: it's boyish. Freedom should be generous. Besides, I owe you a fair start in life in exchange for disinheriting you. You cant become prime minister at once. Havnt you a turn for something? What about literature, art, and so forth?

Stephen : I have nothing of the artist about me, either in faculty or character, thank Heaven!

Undershaft : A philosopher, perhaps? Eh?

Stephen : I make no such ridiculous pretension.

Undershaft : Just so. Well, there is the army, the navy, the Church, the Bar. The Bar requires some ability. What about the Bar?

Stephen : I have not studied law. And I am afraid I have not the necessary push—I believe that is the name barristers give to their vulgarity—for success in pleading.

Undershaft : Rather a difficult case, Stephen. Hardly anything left but the stage, is there?...... Well, come! is there anything you know or care for?

Stephen : ......I know the difference between right and wrong.

Undershaft : (*hugely tickled*). You dont say so! What! no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists: the secret of right and wrong. Why, man, youre a genius, a master, a god! At twentyfour, too!

Stephen : (*Keeping his temper with difficulty*). You are pleased to be facetious. I pretend to nothing more than any honorable English gentleman claims as his birthright (*he sits down angrily*).

The Government and the Political System Satirised

Undershaft regards all young men to be impractical and unrealistic. They claim to know the difference between right and wrong, but they don't know even such simple matters as "the bursting strain of a ten-inch gun"; they dare not handle high explosives, but they are all ready to handle honesty and truth and justice and the whole duty of man, and kill one another at that game. Undershaft then ironically remarks: "What a country! What a a world!"

When Lady Britomart asks Undershaft as to what career Stephen should better take up, he ironically replies :

> Oh, just what he wants to do. He knows nothing and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career. Get him a private secretaryship to someone who can get him an Under Secretaryship ; and then leave him alone. He will find his natural and proper place in the end on the Treasury Bench.

When Stephen objects to it and says that he will not hear the Government of his country insulted, Undershaft tells him that he and his like are the real rulers of the country :

> The government of your country ! I am the government of your country : I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus ? No, my friend : you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesnt. You will find that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country ! Be off with you, my boy, and play with your caucuses and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning questions and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting-house to pay the piper and call the tune.

But Stephen does not agree with this view of his father. In his opinion it is character, the English national character, formed in the public schools and universities, that governs the country. And he has that character whereas his father has only money. To this Undershaft sarcastically retorts that he has found a profession for him ; he is a born journalist, and to help him settle in life he would start "a high-toned weekly review".

Discussion About the Cannon Foundry

Before Stephen can reply Barbara, Sarah, Lomax, and Cusins come in ready for walking ; they are ready to visit the cannon foundry in the Parish of Perivale St. Andrews. As Lady Britomart goes out to dress up, they discuss the cannon foundry. Barbara thinks that the cannon works must be dark and dirty like Hell, but Undershaft

informs her that it is a spotlessly clean and beautiful hillside town. There is a Methodist chapel and an Ethical society, and the workers are all religious. Undershaft further tells them that he never gives orders to his men. But there is perfect discipline; there are different grades and cadres, and those who are in the superior cadres manage and control those in the lower ones. Every man of them keeps the man just below him in his place. He never meddles with them, he never bullies them:

> The men snub the boys and order them about; the carmen snub the sweepers; the artisans snub the unskilled laborers; the foremen drive and bully both the laborers and artisans; the assistant engineers find fault with the foremen; the chief engineers drop on the assistants; the departmental managers worry the chiefs; and the clerks have tall hats and hymnbooks and keep up the social tone by refusing to associate on equal terms with anybody. The result is a colossal profit, which comes to me.

Barbara Agrees to Visit the Factory

Undershaft then tells Barbara that he thinks that he has made her unhappy. Barbara retorts:

> Do you think I can be happy in this vulgar silly dress? I! who have worn the uniform. Do you understand what you have done to me? Yesterday I had a man's soul in my hand. I set him in the way of life with his face to salvation. But when we took your money he turned back to drunkenness and derision. (*With intense conviction*). I will never forgive you that. If I had a child, and you destroyed its body with your explosives if you murdered Dolly with your horrible guns—I could forgive you if my forgiveness would open the gates of heaven to you. But to take a human soul from me, and turn it into the soul of a wolf! that is worse than any murder.

Undershaft asks Barbara: "Does my daughter despair so easily? Can you strike a man to the heart and leave no mark on him?" This cheers up Barbara, for she at once realises that a man once saved can never be lost again; she exclaims "where was my faith?" She tells her father that he may be a devil; but God speaks through him sometimes. She tells him: "You have given me back my happiness: I feel it deep down now, though my spirit is troubled." She has learned something. The experience has been an education to her. She is now eager and ready to go to the 'factory of death', for she wants to learn something more. There must be some truth behind all this frightful irony.

The Heavenly City

The scene now shifts to the works of Undershaft and Lazarus in the Parish of Perivale St. Andrews, which lies between two Middlesex hills. It is an almost smokeless town of white walls. The town looks beautiful and fascinating in the natural surroundings. The town is neat and clean. There are cannons, chimneys and dummy soldiers with gashes all around. The buildings are of the lightest possible construction. Cusins finds the city "wonderful", "real", where everything is perfect. He says: "It only needs a cathedral to be a heavenly city instead of a hellish one." When Stephen asks Cusins if he has found anything discreditable in the city, he replies: "They call him Dandy Andy and are proud of his being a cunning old rascal; but it's all horribly, frightfully, immorally, unanswerably perfect." Sarah and Stephen inform others that there are libraries and schools, a nursing home, a ball room and the banqueting chamber in the Town Hall. There are various welfare measures for the workers, such as the insurance fund, the pension fund, the building society, etc.

Ease, Anxiety and Dangers

Undershaft comes from the office beaming with joy for his aerial battleship has been a tremendous success. At the first trial it has wiped out a fort with three hundred soldiers in it. Cusins and Barbara are horrified at the cruel destruction. Then Undershaft asks Stephen as to what he thinks of the place. Stephen replies that it is magnificent, a perfect triumph of modern industry. He admires his father's power of organization, his administrative capacity, and his financial genius. Stephen says that he has been repeating to himself as he came through the streets: "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than War." But he has only one misgiving. He feels that the workers live too luxuriously; they are pampered, and this may weaken them and their vitality. Undershaft assures him that there is no such fear, for a sufficient dose of anxiety is always provided by the fact that they may be blown to smithereens at any moment. The explosives are made in little sheds, and even a little carelessness may cause a dangerous explosion.

A comic diversion is provided here by the arrival of Bilton, the foreman. Bilton complains against Charles Lomax that he lighted a match and threw it into one of the sheds. As a precautionary measure, Undershaft takes the match box from Lomax and pockets it, and this reassures Bilton who goes away. The incident dramatically stresses the constant danger the workers have to face in the foundry. This keeps them active, agile and alert.

Inheritance Discussed Again

Lady Britomart has taken a round of the town and she has been fascinated by it. She is determined to have it. She says:

> Your ridiculous cannons and that noisy banging foundry may be the Undershaft inheritance ; but all that plate and linen, all that furniture and those houses and orchards and gardens belong to us. They belong to me : they are not a man's business. I wont give them up. You must be out of your senses to throw them all away ; and if you persist in such folly, I will call in the doctor.

Lady Britomart suggests that if Stephen cannot inherit his father's property, then it can pass on to Barbara if Adolphus succeeds to the inheritance She can manage the town for him, and he can look after the cannons.

Adolphus Cusins : A Foundling

Undershaft says that he would be glad if Cusins inherits the property. He is exactly the sort of new blood that is wanted in English business. But he is not a foundling, and as such his claim cannot be considered.

But Cusins points out that the foundling difficulty can be got over. He says that he joined the Army to worship Barbara : she bought his soul. But when he came to know that she was enormously rich, that her grand-father was an earl, and that her father was the Prince of Darkness, he stooped to deceive her about his birth. Cusins tells them that he may not be a foundling in his own country, Australia, but he is certainly a foundling in England, for his mother was his father's deceased wife's sister, and such a marriage is illegal according to English laws. This is, no doubt, a subterfuge, but none the less Undershaft accepts it and takes Adolphus to be a foundling.

But then there is another difficulty. The Undershaft heir must be uneducated, and Cusins is educated, is a professor. This difficulty is also overcome by Cusins, when he points out that he has not been educated in an English public school, and that Greek, instead of weakening his mind, has nourished and strengthened it. Undershaft pronounces ; "You are eligible, Euripides : you are eligible."

The Bargain Scene : Practical Details Settled

Undershaft then asks Cusins that they should settle the practical business details. He agrees to change his name. Cusins proves too shrewd and tactful for Undershaft. He does not agree to a thousand a year. He demands two thousand five hundred a year for two years. At the end of that time, if he is a failure, he goes. But if he is a success, and stays on, then Undershaft must give him the other five thousands, that is to make the two years up to five thousand a year. The two thousand five hundred is only a

half pay in case he should turn out a failure. Furthermore, in the third year he must have ten per cent on the profits. Cusins knows that it is a very high price, but it will be paid, for, as he puts it, "you cannot do without me ; and I cannot do without you."

When Undershaft points out that he should not ask for such a high price since he is bringing no capital into the concern, Cusins remarks :

> What ! no capital ! is my mastery of Greek no capital ? Is my access to the subtlest thought, the loftiest poetry yet attained by humanity, no capital ? My character ! my intellect ! my life ! my career ! what Barbara calls my soul ! are these no capital ? Say another word ; and I double my salary.

At last the bargain is struck and Undershaft agrees to pay three-fifths of what Cusins has demanded.

The Moral Question

In reply to a question from Barbara, Cusins replies that the real tug of war is still to come. Then he asks Undershaft to settle the moral question. Lady Britomart advises Cusins that he should sell cannons and weapons to people whose cause is right and just, and refuse them to foreigners and criminals. But Undershaft makes it clear that if Cusins comes into his business he will have to keep the true faith of an Armorer :

> To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles : to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man, white man and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and all crimes. The first Undershaft wrote up in his shop IF GOD GAVE THE HAND, LET NOT MAN WITHHOLD THE SWORD. The second wrote up ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FIGHT : NONE HAVE THE RIGHT TO JUDGE. The third wrote up to MAN THE WEAPON : TO HEAVEN THE VICTORY. The fourth had no literary turn ; so he did not write up anything ; but he sold cannons to Napoleon under the nose of George the Third. The fifth wrote up PEACE SHALL NOT PREVAIL SAVE WITH A SWORD IN HER HAND. The sixth, my master, was the best of all. He wrote up NOTHING IS EVER DONE IN THIS WORLD UNTIL MEN ARE PREPARED TO KILL ONE

> ANOTHER IF IT IS NOT DONE. After that, there was nothing left for the seventh to say. So he wrote up, simply, UNASHAMED.

Cusins retorts to this long speech of Undershaft that he (Cusins) will write up something in Greek, so that none is able to read it. But as regards the Armourer's faith he will have his own way : "If I take my neck out of the noose of my morality I am not going to put it into the noose of yours. I shall sell cannons to whom I please and refuse them to whom I please."

The Question of Power

Undershaft remarks that the moment Cusins becomes 'Andrew Undershaft', he will never do as he pleases. He then asks him : "Dont come here lusting for power, young man." Cusins retorts that Undershaft has no power, that he does not drive this place, the place drives him. And what drives the place ? The place is driven by the most rascally part of society, the money hunters, the pleasure hunters, the military promotion hunters, and Undershaft is their slave. But Undershaft does not agree with this view for he sells his cannons to all, good and bad alike, and so it cannot be said that the place is run only by the wicked. It is another matter that the good people don't have courage enough to fight and so don't care much for weapons. The fault lies with them ; he should not be blamed for their weakness. Then Undershaft asks Barbara to explain to Cusins what power really means. Barbara, as if fascinated, tells them that till yesterday she thought she was in the power of God. But then came her father who showed her that she was in the power of Bodger and Undershaft :

> I stood on the rock I thought eternal ; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me, an army marching to Salvation with me ; and in a moment, at a stroke of your pen in a cheque book, I stood alone ; and the heavens were empty. That was the first shock of the earthquake : I am waiting for the second.

Plea For Religious and Moral Reform

Undershaft then becomes the mouthpiece of Shaw's most scathing criticism of our outdated moral codes. He tells Barbara that when their machinery becomes old and worn out, they scrap it. Similarly their religion and morality have become outmoded, they should scrap them :

> That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos ; but it wont scrap

> its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions...dont persist in that folly. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow.

Barbara retorts that she is prepared to accept a better religion, but not a worse one. She asks her father to justify the destructive, dark and wicked work which is being done there, though outwardly there are beautiful clean workshops, respectable workmen, and model homes. Undershaft replies that cleanliness and respectability do not need justification ; they justify themselves. He says :

> I see no darkness here, no dreadfulness. In your Salvation shelter I saw poverty, misery, cold and hunger. You gave them bread and treacle and dreams of heaven. I give them thirty shillings a week to twelve thousand a year. They find their own dreams ; but I look after the drainage.

The Crime of Poverty

Answering a question, Undershaft tells Barbara that he saves the souls of workers as he saved hers, for he fed and clothed and housed her. He took care that she should have enough money to live handsomely and be wasteful, careless and generous. He tells Barbara : "That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins," which are food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children.

> Nothing can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money ; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara ; and I saved her from the crime of poverty.

Barbara is surprised to hear that poverty is a crime. Undershaft goes on to say :

> The worst of crimes. All the other crimes are virtues beside it : all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities ; spreads horrible pestilence ; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing : a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then : what do they matter ? they are only the accidents and illnesses of life : there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill fed, ill clothed people. They poison us morally and physically : they kill the happiness of society : they force us to do away

> with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss. Only fools fear crime: we all fear poverty.

Undershaft's Challenge

Undershaft believes that the souls of the poor can be saved more easily by paying them a decent salary. If the poor are better fed, better housed, better clothed, they will be more noble and will behave better. He asserts:

> It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms Try your hand on my men: their souls are hungry because their bodies are full.

Thus Undershaft challenges Barbara to do the salvation work among his workers. Since his workers are well-fed, they cannot easily be bribed and tempted by the offer of food in this world and the promise of a blessed life in the other. This does not mean that the poor who live in the East End of London are to be neglected. Undershaft himself has been an East Ender, and so he knows that the poor are not to be saved by preaching and praying. He remarks:

> I had the strongest scruples about poverty and starvation. Your moralists are quite unscrupulous about both: they make virtues of them. I had rather be a thief than a pauper. I had rather be a murderer than a slave. I dont want to be either; but if you force the alternative on me, by Heaven, I'll choose the braver and more moral one. I hate poverty and slavery worse than any other crime whatsover. And let me tell you this. Poverty and slavery have stood up for centuries to your sermons and leading articles: they will not stand up to my machine guns. Dont preach at them: dont reason with them. Kill them.

Social Justice

The advice of Undershaft shocks them all. He further points out that the power springs from the barrel of a gun, that social injustice cannot be eradicated through ballot. Voting means changing the names of the government and the governors, it does not mean any social change. But with the barrel of a gun you pull down governments, inaugurate new epochs, abolish old orders and set up new. This is what history tells us. Undershaft believes that

whatever can blow men up can blow society up. The history of the world is the history of those who had courage enough to embrace this truth.

Lady Britomart Annoyed

Lady Britomart is extremely annoyed ; she wants her children to come to her, for their father is the wickedest man. But Barbara points out that it is no use running away from wicked people. The children refuse to obey Lady Britomart. She calls Charles Lomax a fool, Cusins a Jesuit, Stephen a prig, Barbara a lunatic, and Andrew a vulgar tradesman. She says : "Now you all know my opinion ; and my conscience is clear." But Undershaft ironically remarks : "My dear : you are the incarnation of morality......Your conscience is clear and your duty done when you have called everybody names."

Undershaft Quotes Plato

It is getting late and Undershaft asks Cusins to let him know his decision. Cusins is in a dilemma. He wants Barbara and she may not like to marry him if he enters the cannon business. He also does not want to be called a rascal. He cares for pity and love. Undershaft calls 'Pity' the scavenger of misery, and considers 'love' to be a hollow gospel, for Cusins does not love all without distinction. Cusins agrees with Undershaft and says : "Every true Englishman detests the English. We are the wickedest nation on earth ; and our success is a moral horror." Undershaft ironically remarks that 'Pity' and 'Love' have failed Cusins, he may try 'forgiveness'. Cusins says that forgiveness is a beggar's refuge. Undershaft then says that in that case he (Cusins) will suit him. As he quotes Plato in support of his decision :

> Plato says, my friend, that society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek.

Cusins calls Undershaft a 'tempter'. Undershaft wants Cusins to take decision quickly. Cusins points out that he hates war. Undershaft then says that he should join his business so that he may "make war on war". Mere hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated. After that Undershaft leaves asking Cusins to come to the foundry the next day.

Stephen Impressed

Stephen is impressed by his father and his business ; he is almost converted. He tells Cusins :

> Dont let anything I have said about right and wrong prejudice you against this great chance in life. I have satisfied myself that the business is one of the highest character and a credit to our country. (*Emotionally*). I am very proud of my father.

Cusins and Barbara Discuss the 'Real Power'

Left alone, Cusins tells Barbara that he is going to accept the offer. His only worry is whether Barbara would now be willing to marry him or not. He says that he has always been selling his soul : "I have sold it for a professorship. I have sold it for an income. I have sold it to escape being imprisoned for refusing to pay taxes for hangman's ropes and unjust wars and things that I abhor." But now he has sold his soul neither for money, nor for position and comfort, but for reality and for power. And he wants this power not for himself but for the world. He tried to make power by teaching Greek. But no power is possible through a dead language and a dead civilization. The people must have power, and the power that is manufactured in the foundry can be wielded by all men. Barbara points out that it is power to burn women's houses down and kill their sons and tear their husbands to pieces. Cusins however, replies :

> You cannot have power for good without power for evil too. Even mother's milk nourishes murderers as well as heroes. This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic, religious power that can enslave men's souls. As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyers, the doctors, the priests, the literary men, the professors, the artists, and the politicians, who, once in authority, are more disastrous and tyrannical than all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a power simple enough for common men to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good.

In the past when the Greeks were at war with the Turks, Cusins gave to one of his best pupils a revolver and a hundred Undershaft catridges. Cusins says : "The blood of every Turk he shot—if he shot any—is on my head as well as on Undershaft's. That act committed me to this place for ever. Your father's challenge has beaten me. Dare I make war on war ? I dare. I must. I will."

And now he (Cusins) thinks that it is all over between Barbara and him.

Barbara's Ideas

But Barbara says that it is not all over between her and Cusins. She accepts him. She, however, conveys her feelings and ideas to him :

> I was happy in the Salvation Army for a moment. I escaped from the world into a paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul saving ; but the moment our money ran short, it all came back to Bodger : it was he who saved our people : he, and the Prince of Darkness, my papa. Undershaft and Bodger : their hands stretch everywhere : when we feed a starving fellow creature, it is with their bread, because there is no other bread ; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow ; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our back on life.

Barbara also realises that there are no good and wicked sides to life ; life is all one, and she did not want to shirk her share in whatever evil which must be endured, whether it be sin or suffering. She does not want to live a useless life of middle-class respectability. She tells Cusins that if he had refused her father's offer, she would have given him up and married the man who accepted it, for she would not like to lose that place. It is not that she cares for its houses and the kitchen and the linen and china, but because there are "human souls to be saved"—

> not weak souls in starved bodies, sobbing with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, but fullfed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their little rights and dignities, and thinking that my father ought to be greatly obliged to them for making so much money for him—and so he ought. That is where salvation is really wanted. My father shall never throw it in my teeth again that my converts were bribed with bread. (*she is transfigured*). I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women. When I die, let him be in my debt, not I in his ; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank.

Barbara Finds Her Place and Her Work

Barbara finds her place and her work. She would pass through the factory of death. She would raise hell to heaven and man to God. She would like to unveil an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow. Her courage has revived. She is not a deserter. She would be Major Barbara again and die with the colours. And she is grateful to Cusins, for it is he who has found for her the true place and true work. She is completely transfigured, and shouts the Salvation Army slogan, "Glory Hallelujah". She is extremely happy, because she has found her true vocation. Out of enthusiasm born out of this confidence, she shouts for her mother and asks her to help her find a house in the village to live in with Dolly (Cusins).

The play ends with Undershaft reminding Cusins that he should come to the foundry at six o'clock, the next morning, and start his work.

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Critical Commentary on Major Barbara

ACT I

The Opening Scene

The play begins with all the appearance of a social comedy, and Act One is set in 'the library in Lady Britomart Undershaft's house in Wilton Crescent.' We are at once in the world of an Oscar Wilde comedy where incomes of pounds 2,000 a year (a huge sum in 1905, when the play was written) are looked on as normal, a fact that throws into relief the poverty that Shaw shows us at the Salvation Army shelter later in the play. The exposition scene between Lady Britomart—a typical organising matron—and her son, Stephen, is most skilfully managed. We are given all essential information concerning the strange family situation of the Undershafts in a way that is always amusing. We are never conscious that we are having facts loaded on to us because Shaw makes his two characters so instantly real. They may be types rather than individuals, but perhaps the defence of this would be that so many people of any class, even today, react in a way that is literally 'true to type'. In a later scene, at the beginning of Act Three, Shaw, speaking through Undershaft, mercilessly mocks the Stephens of this world with their assumptions based on class attitudes and upbringing, rather than on a clear-sighted examination of the facts.

The main points that emerge from the opening section of the play are that Lady Britomart's estranged husband, Andrew Undershaft, is a fabulously wealthy manufacturer of armaments and that Lady Britomart's daughter, Barbara, has joined the Salvation Army, discharged her maid, and is living on a pound a week. Lady Britomart explains that Undershaft is a foundling and reveals that one of the reasons she separated from him was his insistence on adhering to the tradition that the Undershaft business should descend to another foundling, which would cut out Stephen from the inheritance. In addition to this, she prepares us for

Undershaft's unhypocritical cast of mind when she says, "But your father didnt exactly do wrong things : he said them and thought them : that was what was so dreadful. He really had a sort of religion of wrongness... I couldnt forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality."

The importance of the first act lies in the fact that it introduces all the major actors, and its interest also lies in the return of Undershaft to the bosom of his family.

Major Barbara

In Act One we learn quite a lot about Barbara before we see her. Lady Britomart's lack of advance warning of Undershaft's visit is explained by the fact that it will not allow Barbara, who, 'Ever since they made her a major in the Salvation Army... has developed a propensity to have her own way and order people about,' to refuse to meet her father or make a fuss. Not surprisingly therefore the play develops into a contest between Barbara and her father, the one on the side of God, the other very much echoing Shaw's view that salvation must come to us solely because of our own efforts.

Significant Error on Undershaft's Part

In view of later developments we should also take note of a significant error in recognition on Undershaft's part when he is being introduced to his family and their prospective marriage partners. After mistaking Charles Lomax for his son Stephen, and having the mistake pointed out to him, Undershaft passes on to the Professor, Cusins, saying, 'Then *you* must be my son.' The sentence can be taken in two ways and foreshadows exactly what does happen at the end of the play when Cusins becomes the heir to the armaments business, having established a rather tenuous claim to being a foundling.

Humour

Act One contains a good deal of serious material that will be enlarged later on by Shaw, but we should be doing him a disservice if we fail to observe how cleverly he uses his sense of comedy to keep the audience's attention in this section of the play. The 'silly ass' character of Charles Lomax is extremely amusing, as is the way in which he is so tartly put down by Lady Britomart. For example, when it is learned that Undershaft is coming to the house, Sarah says, 'Well, he cant eat us, I suppose. I dont mind' ; to be followed by—

Lomax (*chuckling*) : I wonder how the old man will take it.

Lady Britomart : Much as the old woman will, no doubt, Charles.

Lomax (abashed) : I didnt mean—at least—

Lady Britomart : You didnt think, Charles. You never do ; and the result is, you never mean anything.

This is only one of the occasions on which Lomax speaks out without considering the effect of what he is about to say. Generally the result is to cause a laugh and to give the audience a safety valve when they are in danger of being overwhelmed by so many ideas. With Lomax on stage the play is in no danger of becoming over-solemn.

Stephen

In Act One three of the characters are little more than lumber : Stephen, the son ; Sarah, one of the daughters ; and Charles Lomax who is Sarah's young man Sarah is scarcely alive. Lomax is a lay figure of fun. The best that can be said for him is that he has some resemblance to Mr. Tite Barnacle in *Little Dorrit*. Stephen, who starts off well enough, peters out. The scene between him and his mother, Lady Britomart Undershaft, at the beginning of the play is excellent fun and suggests that Stephen's inevitable revolt against her will be important, but he falls to pieces thereafter and does not appear in the second act Lady Britomart, too, loses authority as the play develops. She may be described as Ann Whitefield of *Man and Superman* in her middle age : still seeking and obtaining her own way while pretending that her sole desire is to please other people.

The Bargain

The crux of the play is the confrontation of the viewpoints which Barbara and Undershaft represent, and the plot revolves round the bargain made between father and daughter in Act One. Of all Undershaft's family Barbara alone interests him, and his heart goes out to her, though he would resent such a description of his feelings. They both have religious natures, but the beliefs of each are poles asunder. Each wishes to convert the other, and they strike a bargain ; he will visit her Salvation Army shelter, if she will afterwards visit his gun-manufactory. The second act is laid at the shelter.

ACT II

The Shelter Scene

In Act Two we see 'Major' Barbara, the selfless, efficient organiser of her shelter, and we are left in no doubt as to her great abilities. In the midst of poverty, faced with difficult customers of different kinds in Peter Shirley and Bill Walker, she is always in control—at least until the end of the act. Her sympathy and human warmth are shown in her dealings with Peter Shirley, and the first hint in the play of Shaw's attitude to belief comes out in one of her remarks to him. After she has guessed that he is not a Christian, Barbara says: "My own father's a Secularist, I think. Our Father—yours and mine—fulfils himself in many ways; and I daresay he knew what he was about when he made a Secularist of you." The implication that true religion is to be found in an attitude sincerely held, however unorthodox it may be, is something that Shaw is to return to in the play and also in *Androcles and the Lion.*

Barbara is seen as a formidable creature in her encounter with Bill Walker, the tough who comes to the shelter to take his girl, Mog Habbijam, who has been there for help. He terrorises the weaker 'soupkitcheners', as he calls them, and strikes the young Salvation Army girl, Jenny Hill. However, although soon afterwards Bill is physically humiliated by Todger, who is now a sergeant in the Salvation Army, it is the way that Barbara works on his conscience that makes the greatest impression on him and on us.

He has been somewhat put down by Shirley's information that 'the major here is the Earl of Stevenage's granddaughter,' and when Barbara enters, 'Bill, cowed, sits down in the corner on a form, and turns his back on them.' When Barbara speaks to him she does so unemotionally and briskly, putting his name down in her book and entering him 'as the man who—struck—poor Little Jenny Hill—in the mouth.' By insisting quietly on his brutality Barbara reduces Bill to a state of guilt, and to his alarm speaks of saving his soul. She will not leave him alone, so that he goes off to Canning Town in order to repay Jenny for having hit her. His sense of rough justice tells him that if Todgar Fairmile hits him it will make matters square. Adolphus agrees with him, but Barbara retorts that 'Two black eyes wont make one white one, Bill.' Throughout the scene it is amusing to note how horrified Bill is by Barbara's preaching at him. We see this when Barbara introduces him to Adolphus :

Barbara : Oh ! there you are, Dolly. Let me introduce a new friend of mine, Mr. Bill Walker. This is my bloke, Bill : Mr Cusins.

Bill : Gowin to merry in ?

Barbara : Yes.

Bill : (*fervently*) Gawd elp im ! Gaw-aw-aw-awd elp im !

Barbara : Why ? Do you think he wont be happy with me ?

Bill : Awve aonyed to stend it for a mawnin : e'll ev to stend it for a lawftawm.

The Theme Restated

Just before Bill goes off to Canning Town, Undershaft arrives. We have already been given vivid examples of the evil effects of poverty, which has been shown to cause hypocrisy, lying and loss of self-respect ; now Shaw brings his spokesman back on to the scene. Immediately, the theme of the play is restated for us when Undershaft tells Barbara that his religion is being a millionaire.

The antithetical exchange between Shirley and Undershaft leaves us in no doubt as to the point Shaw was trying to put over. Barbara has just said 'Youre not a Millionaire, are you, Peter ?'

Shirley : No : and proud of it.

Undershaft : (*gravely*) Poverty, my friend, is not a thing to be proud of.

Shirley : (*angrily*) Who made your millions for you ? Me and my like. Whats kep us poor ? Keepin you rich. I wouldnt have your conscience, not for all your income.

Undershaft : I wouldnt have your income not for all your conscience, Mr. Shirley.

Barbara : A Link Between the Episodes

The remainder of the act is taken up by a conversation between Adolphus and Undershaft, the return of Bill Walker, humiliated, from

Canning Town, and Mrs. Baines's attempts to get enough money to keep the Salvation Army shelters open through the hard winter. Barbara, although not on stage the whole time, acts as a link between the episodes, as her influence is great on all the parties concerned.

Emphasis on Social Equality

We have noticed that Undershaft and Cusins did not have a great deal to say to one another in Act One, but now they make up for it. Cusins is immediately taken by Undershaft's honesty when he says that the only two things necessary for salvation are money and gunpowder. The short section following this revelation is of great interest since it expresses Shaw's opinions, though not in literal terms :

> Cusins : Excuse me : is there any place in your religion for honor, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth ?
>
> Undershaft : Yes : they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life.
>
> Cusins : Suppose one is forced to choose between them and money or gunpowder ?
>
> Undershaft : Choose money and gunpowder ; for without enough of both of them you cannot afford the others.

We should not suppose that Shaw advocated violence and revolution. He was himself the least blood thirsty of men, but here he is surely saying, in a metaphorical way, that one must fight for one's rights and that without the preliminary skirmishing nothing will be achieved in the way of social equality. Undershaft reinforces this view by insisting on the necessity of acquiring 'money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master.

The Conversation Between Undershaft and Cusins

Beneath the debate between Undershaft and Cusins it is obvious that the two men feel a strong attraction towards one another, so that we are not surprised to find Adolphus marching away with Undershaft at the end of the act, and later in the play taking over the cannon business from him. Cusins prepares us for this when he admits to being 'a sort of collector of religions,' and although he claims to be a sincere Salvationist it is obvious that he is drawn towards the rather devilish power of Undershaft. He recognises in him a man who lives according to outmoded social

conventions. Cusins himself admits that what fascinates him about the Salvation Army are its qualities 'of joy, of love, of courage : it has banished the fear and remorse and despair of the old hell-ridden evangelical sects : it marches to fight the devil with trumpet and drum, with music and dancing, with banner and palm, as becomes a sally from heaven by its happy garrison.' We are not surprised by his reply, when Undershaft charges him with readiness to convert the Salvation Army to the worship of Dionysos :

> Cusins : The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder. Dionysos or another : what does it matter ?

The interchange between Cusins and Undershaft reveals that the millionaire intends Barbara to carry on with his gospel of 'money and gunpowder, Freedom and power, Command of life and command of death.' In a splendidly effective quiet speech he underlines the fact that poverty is hateful and says that to love poverty, disease and suffering is wicked : 'We three must stand together above the common people : how else can we help their children to climb beside us ? Barbara must belong to us, not to the Salvation Army.' This section of the play ends with a hint of what is to come when Undershaft speaks of buying the Salvation Army, and there is a display of verbal fireworks in a rapid exchange of views about what the Army does for the poor, Undershaft capping every statement of Cusins's with a cynical, practical reason for welcoming every reform Cusins mentions.

The Conversion of Bill

Bill reveals that he has been used as a carpet by Todger Fairmile, who has led prayers for his salvation, and we see how his feelings of guilt for having struck Jenny Hill are still preying on him. He wishes to discharge his debt with money, which immediately reminds us of Barbara's words to her father when refusing his offer— 'You cant buy your salvation here for twopence : you must work it out.' Nevertheless, Bill throws a sovereign down on the upturned brass drum, hoping to gain some peace by so doing. Barbara still maintains that the Army is not to be bought and that nothing less than Bill's soul will suffice : 'Youll never have another quiet moment, Bill, until you come round to us. You cant stand out against your salvation.' We have the feeling that Barbara is very close to gaining an unwilling convert.

Two Points

Before the climactic event of Undershaft offering to equal Bodger the Brewer's gift of pounds 5, 00 to keep the Salvation

Army shelter open all winter, there are two other points to be noticed. Firstly, we should take note of Undershaft's approval of the methods of the poor who rioted in 1886, thus drawing attention to their plight in a way that caused the rich to notice them in a practical fashion to the tune of pounds 49,000 in a single day: this is what Undershaft means by 'money and gunpowder'. Secondly, we have a further indication of Snobby Price's cunning when he steals Bill Walker's sovereign before skulking off to avoid his mother whom he has maligned in his 'confession'.

The Ending of Act Two

The ending of Act Two is rather complex Undershaft makes no attempt to disguise from Mrs. Baines the fact that his own fortune depends on bloodshed and slaughter, and yet she is able, through simple faith, to say, 'The longer I live the more proof I see that there is an Infinite Goodness that turns everything to the work of salvation sooner or later.' Barbara is not able to adopt this attitude, particularly when Adolphus appears to desert her as well. He, it seems, is completely captivated by the dynamic qualities of Undershaft that he has recognised earlier in the scene and is, like a follower of Dionysos, temporarily possessed. Barbara is so dispirited by the fact that her father has shown it is possible to buy the Army and she feels that she cannot go to the big meeting and she may never pray again As the procession goes off she is led to say, 'Drunkenness and Murder! My God: why hast thous forsaken me?'—a deliberate echo of Christ's words on the cross that was to provoke the charge of blasphemy at the time of the play's first production.

Act Two ends with Barbara's very near defeat. She is forced to face the fact that Snobby Price is a fraud and that she has lost the chance of converting Bill Walker, as he has seen that money can be of greater value than souls. It is not surprising that when we next see her she has discarded her Salvation Army uniform.

ACT III

Stephen

The third act begins in Wilton Crescent before the characters go to visit Undershaft's model town and factory. The early part of the scene in the library is amusing, showing Adolphus with a slight hangover—the result of an evening's drinking with Undershaft after the meeting they had both attended. We are also diverted by the exchanges between Charles Lomax and Lady Britomart. Before the departure for Perivale St. Andrews we are once more reminded of the conditions of the Undershaft inheritance since Lady Britomart

is adamant that Stephen should be given the opportunity to run the factory. The interchange between Undershaft and his wife gives Shaw an opportunity to snipe at the English educational system and, most important of all from the point of view of the plot, Undershaft tells Lady Britomart, 'If you want to keep the foundry in the family, you had better find an eligible foundling and marry him to Barbara.'

Stephen is a very wooden figure who is only in the play for the requirements of the plot. He has no real individuality and his function is to be on the receiving end of Undershaft's wit or to be the object of Lady Britomart's manoeuvrings. In the early part of Act Three he occupies the centre of the stage while discussing his future with his father. His pomposity and the way in which he is convinced he is right on all occasions cause us, in a way, to admire his courage even though we cannot share his opinions. The scene shows him standing up to Undershaft and in the course of their conversation Shaw is able to point out what great prejudices existed in England at the time the play was written and how a conviction of being born to rule, held by those in high places, often masked incompetence. In some of Undershaft's speeches in this section of the play we can see a favourite technique of Shaw's at work: a speech by one character seems to be addressed to another character, but is in reality being directed at the audience. This is particularly true of the speech in which Undershaft tells Stephen that the financiers, not the politicians, govern the country.

The 'Heavenly' City

The scene at Perivale St. Andrews contains some of Shaw's finest rhetoric and displays his dramatic sense at its best. The stage direction describing the city stresses its idyllic aspect, and Cusins's first remark reinforces this impression. 'Everything perfect! wonderful! real! It only needs a cathedral to be a heavenly city instead of a hellish one.' But it is the hellishness of it that is brought home to us early in this scene, we learn that the new aerial battleship wiped out a fort containing three hundred soldiers at its first trial. The scene contains a great deal of variety: mixing the rhetoric of Undershaft, Cusins and Barbara with the comedy of Stephen, Charles Lomax and Lady Britomart. For instance, it is amusing to see Lomax being led away from the high explosives shed for having dropped a red-hot match in it and to hear him tell the foreman. "A little bit of British pluck is what you want, old chap"; while all the acquisitiveness of the British aristocracy comes out in Lady Britomart when she sees the Undershaft possessions: "They belong to me: they are not a man's business. I wont give them up. You must be out of your senses to throw them all away; and if you persist in such folly, I will call in a doctor."

Speeches: Shaw's Power of Rhetoric

Act Three is important because it contains several fine speeches which stress the theme of Shaw's Preface – that poverty is a crime. He speaks of the deadly sins: "Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted." We can see a pointer to the way in which things will go later in the play when he challenges Barbara to try to convert his men, whose souls are hungry because their bodies are full. All of Shaw's power of rhetoric is to be found in these speeches in which Undershaft condemns the demoralising nature of poverty, and the writer is even sufficiently confident to draw attention to the fact that he is sermonising, by allowing Lady Britomart to interject 'Stop making speeches, Andrew. This is not the place for them.' In one sense we can agree, but the vigour of those speeches can captivate any audience.

The Moral of the Play

The moral of the play filtered from Undershaft's plutocratic gospel would run as follows: that the state is one in which no one is poor; that the ideal man is he who shifts vigorously for himself: that the best cure for the present anarchic and miserable state of things, is that every individual should become self-reliant and use the weapons which Undershaft manufactures against those who oppress him; that those who have already some wealth and independence are the people it is most profitable to teach what is good; that to the rest it is more important to preach rebellion.

The Ending of the Play

Undershaft tells Cusins that 'society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek.' For in Adolphus two strains, those of power and poetry, are united, as Eric Bentley noted when he wrote of Cusins combining the idealism of Barbara with the realism of her father. It is generally said that the end of the play is unsatisfactory, for Cusins lacks the magnetism of Undershaft and Barbara's regaining of her faith is less convincing than her previous disillusionment. Nevertheless, the interchange between Barbara and Cusins produces some striking writing and shows that both of them have developed in a way that leaves them ready to face the challenge of life. Cusins has determined to use his newly gained power to make war on war and Barbara has realised that she must look for her work of salvation everywhere. "Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is

turning our backs on life", she says, and her next speech shows that she has made an advance in her thinking : "There is no wicked side : life is all one. And I never wanted to shirk my share in whatever evil must be endured, whether it be sin or suffering."

The play ends on a rising note with the themes of religion and social reform closely connected once again. Barbara indicates that people are put on the earth to be useful and she recognises that her father was right when he challenged her to try to save his well-fed workers : "I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women." She tells Cusins that her courage has come back and that "Major Barbara will die with the colors." Certainly her task will not be easy but she appears to be approaching it with ecstatic enthusiasm.

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Critical Appreciation of Major Barbara

Introduction

Those who hold that men's minds and hearts are closely linked to their pockets and bank balances will consider *Major Barbara* Shaw's most provocative and urgent play. Economics, he points out, plays as big a part in his plays as does the knowledge of anatomy in the work of Michelangelo, and *Major Barbara* is the summit among his plays of his economic knowledge. Founded squarely on the so-called dismal science, it revolves round money and the lack of money.

Is it a dull play, then ? No : because in another sense it is a wrestling match between Shaw the economist and Shaw the dramatist, and fortunately for the theatre-goer the dramatist wins hands down. But unfortunately the dramatist wins this welcome victory only at the double cost of being misunderstood and of omitting the play's meaning. Only in the Preface is this omission repaired. The play leaves only the imprint of a withering attack on the Salvation Army. It is of course intended to be nothing of the sort. Yet until the Preface is read this wholly erroneous impression persists. And how many theatre-goers can be bothered to read a preface ?

The Origin

Far from critically hostile, Shaw's attitude to General Booth's Army was particularly friendly. Indeed from this friendliness the idea of *Major Barbara* directly grew. For the idea might never have entered Shaw's head had he not trounced in print someone who had written to the papers describing some orchestral performance as 'worse than a Salvation Army band'. The vigour of Shaw's reply drew from the delighted General an invitation to the Army's festival of massed bands. Shaw attended, wrote a

professionally musical criticism, and then suggested that the Army's lads and lasses would do well to act little plays as well as sing and play in bands. From there it was but a short step to 'Why not a little play by me ?' And from this, to *Major Barbara*.

The Salvation Army

The play centres round the work being done by the Salvation Army. This Christian missionary organisation was founded by William Booth in London in 1878. It has since extended its work throughout the world, and its officers use titles of military origin, its head being called the General. During the time of Shaw the Salvation Army was still cold-shouldered by the respectable and derided by the impious. The several church-and chapel-going denominations looked askance at what appeared to them to be a regrettable want of decorum in its meetings. According to A. C. Ward : "The tambourines and concertinas, the cornets and drums, the flags with the blood-and-fire motto, the jaunty hymn-tunes, the converts, uninhibited public confessions of past misdeeds, the handclapping as a rhythmical ground-bass to the singing, the begging for pennies, the shouts of 'Glory hallelujah !', the marching and countermarching—all seemed blatant and vulgar to those who took it for granted that religion and respectability were inseparable, and indeed, identical. To hooligans and drunks and mischievous children of the streets, the Salvation Army open-air meetings were still fair game for ribaldry and horse-play."

At the end of the 1890s the Salvation Army had been introduced into a long-remembered American musical comedy, "The Belle of New York", but it is to *Major Barbara* that one must look for the apotheosis of Booth's organization. Shaw's was the first influential voice outside its own ranks to declare that the Salvation Army had restored joy to religion and proclaimed a triumphant faith which must be cried aloud in ecstatic phrases, not murmured and muttered in set terms.

A Great Play

A. C. Ward points out: "However repetitious it may be to harp upon the point, it is important to stress that Shaw's unquenchable sense of fun was of priceless value in rescuing preaching and moralizing from the dreary disrepute into which it had been plunged by numberless Victorian sermonizers. No finer sermon than *Major Barbara* has ever been preached ; no play ever written is more deserving of respect, none holds the attention more readily and continuously, none is more entertaining. *Major Barbara* is one of the several plays by Shaw of which a future critic would be compelled to say, if it were recovered from the ruins of our civilization as the only surviving work of an unidentified author, 'This is a great play by a great and good man'. "

The Theme

In *Major Barbara* it has been shown that Christianity can pretend to save the souls of others, only because it has sold its own soul to Bodger, Lazarus and Undershaft. Society is moving in a vicious circle. It is governed by a set of men who wield the forces of destruction ; it is they who employ the largest number of men, manipulate the largest number of votes and control the largest number of newspapers. Capitalism creates poverty and disease, but it tries to remedy them by founding hospitals and endowing religious associations, which lull rebellion and help to perpetuate iniquity. Bodger the distiller earns huge profits at the expense of poor labourers who are driven by overwork, unemployment and illiteracy, to drinking, and then the same Bodger finances the Salvation Army which preaches against drinking and devild m. The Undershaft gun cotton wounds able-bodied men, and then Undershaft founds hospitals where there are enough comforts for the victims. Thus religious and charitable institution are convenient instruments for the rich. They keep the workman happy. which is an invaluable safeguard against revolution, and by turning his thoughts towards heaven preserve him from Trade Unionism and Socialism.

Major Barbara discovers to her chagrin that only are religious organizations dependent on the charity of the rich who have earned money by fair means and foul, but even an individual can have no religion so long as he is poor. Poverty keeps the soul open to temptations and is, therefore, the greatest of crimes, because it is the fountain of all others. Snobby Price makes professions of repentance, invents confessions to get the wherewithal to satisfy his hunger, and then steals a sovereign at the earliest opportunity that offers itself. This acts as an eye-opener to Major Barbara. who realizes that there can be no religion where men are not full-fed. She is in a state of spiritual desperation. Her religious professions have been proved to be hollow ; her pride has been wounded but not killed. She, therefore, resolves to go to her father's works, where she will get 'not weak souls in starved bodies, crying with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, but full fed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their rights and dignities.' "That is where salvation is really needed," and that is where salvation gets a fair chance and fair play. There her father and rich capitalists will not be able to throw it in her face that her converts are bribed with bread.

Two Main Lines

There are some critics who have been puzzled by Shaw's portraiture of Sir Andrew Undershaft, who is too heroic a figure to

be regarded as a mere caricature, and yet too great a capitalist to be a truly Shavian Superman. William Archer, the greatest of these critics, even finds a contradiction in the doctrines enunciated in this drama "I cannot help thinking", says he, "that there are two main lines, which eventually cross each other, so that the trains of thought which run on them collide, to their mutual destruction. We have on the one hand Mr. Shaw's favourite idea (in which I heartily concur) that poverty is the greatest evil in the world, and its extirpation our first duty. Following Samuel Butler, Mr. Shaw prefers to call it a crime, and I am not disposed to quarrel about words. On that score, then, he has me with him ; but when he proceeds to lay down the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman ; and preach the gospel of high explosives, I cannot harmonize the two ideas." There are really no two ideas in *Major Barbara*, for Andrew Undershaft's gospel is not Shaw's gospel any more than Caliban's ideas are Shakespeare's. Andrew Undershaft is a picture of the inevitable perversion of human talent in a capitalistic society. He is great, he is inevitable, but not undesirable. If poverty is abolished, there will be no property, and there will be no necessity for any explosives to protect it.

The Tragedy of Major Barbara

In the classic drama, tragedy springs out of the whims of the gods on Olympus ; in the romantic drama of Shakespeare, it has its origin in human passions and weaknesses, in character that is Destiny and Destiny that works through fatal flaws in character. In modern realistic drama, the gods have been rejected as unbelievable and the individualist-romanticist point of view has been abandoned as untenable. The only source of tragedy in modern art is to be found in the realization that a man may have a personal consciousness, but he can have no individual character, because character is absolutely dependent on the social organization The tragedy of Major Barbara consists in the realization of this utter helplessness of the individual. When she makes the tragical discovery, she cries out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" When she finds that the temple of God has to be built by Mammon, that the seven deadly sins have to be conquered by money, she feels that the whole world is fast receding from beneath her feet. For a Christian missionary, has she not preached against riches and said that a man cannot serve both God and Mammon ?

A Drama of Ideas

Major Barbara is a great problem play as well as a great drama of ideas, for in this play are discussed a number of important issues and problems. It throws light on Shaw's views on a number of subjects—such as religion and its role as an instrument of social

reform, the evil of poverty and its eradication, the value and significance of money, education, contemporary political and social organizations, the correlation of virtue and wickedness, crime and punishment, the meaning of real power – all have been treated, some merely in passing and some more thoroughly. The discussion becomes more entertaining, for it is accompanied by Shavian wit, humour, retort, satire and repartee. The real action of the play is internal ; it lies in the psychological change or conversion that is brought about during the course of the discussion in the play. The external action is not very important.

The Preface : Its Significance

As usual, Shaw has added a lengthy Preface to the play in which he has given a lucid exposition of his views on a number of subjects, which form the object of discussion in the drama In the Preface in a section headed "The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft", Shaw tells us :

> In the millionaire Undershaft I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate : to wit, that the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty, and that our first duty – a duty to which every other consideration should be sacrificed—is not to be poor.

Shaw goes on to say that the rest of us are so corrupted by the false morality of virtuous poverty that

> we shall pretend that this straightforward truth of mine is mere Swiftian satire, because it would require a little courage to take it seriously and either act on it or make me drink the hemlock for uttering it.

This is the gospel to which St. Andrew Undershaft converts his daughter Barbara from her saving of men's souls with the bribe of happiness in heaven and Cusins from his teaching of Greek and his translating of Euripides.

The Preface also gives us Shaw's views on a number of other subjects such as war, crime and punishment, the reformation of criminals, the exploitation of the poor and the down-trodden always carried on in the name of religion, the role of big-houses in public life, the importance and value of money, the real meaning of poverty and the right means of eradicating it, law and justice, anarchism and the established order and so on.

The Realism of the Play

Major Barbara is a realistic play. The realism of its setting—the library in Wilton Crescent, the Salvation Army shelter in

Canning Town, and the especially topical Garden City—establishes it as a critique of actual society that reveals the spectrum of class and its cruel contrasts. Changes of setting are matched by changes in dramatic style. Wealth, aristocracy and the culture that goes with them play out a comedy of manners in Act I ; Dickensian realism verging on melodrama invades Act II, in the Salvation Army Shelter, bare and chill, with its horse-trough as derisive comment on the poorly dressed wretches at their meal ; Act III presents a Utopia designed by contemporary paternalism, and theory reigns there. Metaphysically, Perivale St. Andrews represents the spiritual cosmos, heaven and hell and the battlefield of the world.

Two Plots

Major Barbara makes an impression of considerable originality, but Shaw did not invent the form. The play dramatizes an issue which is first debated, then tested through a critical experiment. *Major Barbara* may be said to mark a very late stage in the development of the thesis play. The action, as in most plays of this type, takes place in a controlled environment. The play has two plot lines, convergent, but logically independent of one another. The first centres on the question of who is to inherit the Undershaft munitions works. The second culminates in Barbara's decision to leave the Salvation Army and to take service in the arms factory.

Characterization

The characterization of the play is simple. The personages are memorable. Barbara, as the archetypal idealist, would be particularly vulnerable to ironic treatment, but Shaw portrays her without a trace of malice. Her power manifests the comic force that drives her ; and to the extent that she is driven, she is mad. Her lover, Adolphus Cusins, is equally mad in his way, and her father, the empire builder, willingly admits his own irrationality. All three—the poet, the millionaire, and the evangelist—are excessive characters acting under the spell of a force that transcends reason. They move among men therefore with the conscious grace of superior beings. "What we have to do", says Undershaft, "with the common mob of slaves and idolaters ?"

Major Barbara's Conversion

Major Barbara's conversion is a matter of turning from illusion to reality. When her ideals are shattered, she is forced to a realistic appraisal of the facts, the necessary preliminary to a course of effective action. A comparison of her father's works with those of the Army in which she has served forces the realization that

the salvation of humanity as it is presently constituted lies not in the rejection of material values, but in their acceptance. For Barbara this idea opens a new career of evangelism. Henceforth, her work will be done among the strong, not the weak.

The Dramatic Form of the Play

Major Barbara has a unique dramatic form. What Shaw does is to mix together in each play a Molieresque comedy and a Socratic dialogue. *Major Barbara*, together with *Man and Superman* and *John Bull's Other Island*, forms part of a trilogy of philosophical comedies. Each play begins by presenting us with a high-minded idealist, who takes himself with earnest seriousness and looks upon himself as an enlightened reformer. He is then made the subject of a comedy in the style of Moliere, not with the idea of unmasking his hypocrisy, but of exposing the comic contradictions within his ideals and temperament. The problems raised by this character, which appear originally in a farcical-satirical light, are treated more and more seriously until they are shown to be bound up with what Shaw calls "the destiny of nations", and the audience which has settled down for a night of fun finds it must either transform itself from an audience of pleasure-seekers into a "pit of philosophers" or founder hopelessly in the dream sequence of *Man and Superman* or the last acts of *John Bull's Other Island* and *Major Barbara.* Such is the structural pattern which Shaw follows in *Major Barbara*

Conclusion

Major Barbara is a great play with a great theme with a great Act Two. This is one of the plays about rebels which is also a play about a great individual. Shaw calls it an example of 'the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination', a piece of 'tragi-comic irony', but he could better have called it the tragedy of an idealist who discovers that her ideals are false, or cannot be realised in her life time. But her father, the wisest person in the play, restores her sense of proportion in the last act.

All the defects in the first and third acts, however, are made to seem trivial by the vivacity and vigour of the second which is full of veracious character and moving action.

22

Major Barbara : Its Theme

Introduction

Adolphus Cusins says in *Major Barbara* : "We are the wickedest nation on earth, and our success is a moral horror." Such was Shaw's judgement in *John Bull's Other Island* too, but he suggested few definite remedies for this wicked political and economic order : Larry could take shelter in cynicism and Keegan in dreaming of the future while the Gladstonian liberals continued to exploit and perpetuate the vicious social order. In *Major Barbara*, Shaw is not content with non-violent talk : he advocates a complete recognization of society to be achieved by a violent revolution on the part of the workers. instigated and guided by the combined forces of the intellectuals and sincere salvationists In *Major Barbara*, therefore Shaw's artistic aims are : (a) to point out what is wrong with the existing order, (b) to present the current approaches to the solution of the problems, (c) to bring out the utter inefficiency of these approaches. and (d) to suggest solutions of his own through a new order symbolized by the Trinity of Undershaft-Barbara-Cusins at the end of the play. Shaw's emphasis is clearly more on the political and economic plight of the nation than on the religious aspects. Shaw's purpose, moreover, is less iconoclastic and more constructive.

Poverty

What is wrong with the world, says Undershaft, is what is wrong with its political, economic and religious institutions. The worst of society's evils are not murders and thefts but poverty The present attitude of society toward the poor expressed in pious cliches like "poor but honest" is ridiculous and hypocritical. Undershaft was an East Ender ; he moralized and starved until one day he swore that he would be a fullfed free man at all costs. He said, "Thou shalt starve ere I starve" and with that word he became "free and great". As a poor man he was "dangerous" to society, but now he is a "useful, beneficent, kindly person." If the society is to be reformed, then poverty must be removed.

But the present social institutions are not designed to remove poverty. The existing form of democracy, for instance, is in reality a plutocracy or an intellectual oligarchy at the worst. The *de facto* rulers of the country are not the amateurs who sit in that "foolish gabble shop", the Parliament, but millionaires like Undershaft and Lazarus. Lady Britomart rightly says that Undershaft and Lazarus have Europe positively under their thumbs. Therefore, what Shaw is saying is that the present political system serves only to strengthen the capitalists and enslave the poor. The Parliament, the law courts, and the police legalize and sanctify this slavery of the poor to the rich.

Religion

The churches, like the Parliament, are powerless to oppose the evils of the system for, if they oppose it, the existing order will forcibly suppress them. In fact, the bribe of bread and heaven administered by the religious institutions to the poor, as Mrs. Baines points out to Undershaft, keeps persons like Snobby from breaking the rich men's windows. Thus by teaching the poor abject submission, the churches perpetuate capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. Moreover, letting Bodger, and Undershaft buy their salvation with ill-gotten wealth is but a mockery of religion. Neither confession nor atonement is of much social use.

Three Approaches

This iconoclastic function of destroying ideals makes *Major Barbara* as effective social satire But the real greatness of the play lies in Shaw's presentation of an effective programme of social reorgnization. Shaw presents three major approaches to social reform ; (i) the liberalism as symbolized by Lady Britomart and Stephen ; (ii) the methods of the Salvation Army as ideally practiced by Barbara ; and (iii) the role of social critics and intellectuals like Cusins. By pointing out the inadequacy of each of these three approaches, Shaw seeks to convert us to the "Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft" which to him seems to be the inevitable outcome of the dialectical action of the play.

Liberalism

Of these three approaches, the worst one, in Shaw's view, is the liberalism of Stephen and his mother Lady Britomart. Stephen is the uncompromising moralist who claims the knowledge of right and wrong as a birthright of every English gentleman. He is the representative of the idle and ignorant aristocracy, and as such he rightly deserves the derision of Undershaft. Undershaft recommends a political career for Stephen since he "knows nothing and he thinks

he knows everything". On the other hand, Lady Britomart possesses the great Shavian virtues of strength, enterprise, and capacity for organization. Undershaft values this aspect of Lady Britomart's character. But, as he bluntly tells her, she is selfish : she is trying to get his wealth for her children. At the end, neither Lady Britomart nor Stephen experiences conversion to Undershaftism, although both want to possess the factory at Perivale St. Andrews. Shaw's play indeed is not as much a "challenge to liberalism" as it is to the genuinely religious people like Barbara and the intellectuals like professor Cusins.

The Salvation Army

In the presentaion of the second approach to reform—that of the Salvation Army or of religion in general and of Barbara in particular – the play demonstrates in no uncertain terms the failure of the existing religions which are only the tools of the capitalists to keep the workers in slavery and submissiveness. Nevertheless, Shaw greatly admired the sincerity, courage and genius of such religious leaders as Barbara. True to the Undershaft inheritance, she is original in her religion and correctly interprets the teachings of Jesus Christ. She renounces the fireside for "larger loves and diviner dreams", voluntarily joins the least snobbish of the reform movements, refuses to accept less than Bill's soul for his misdeeds, and cannot be humbugged into the "Crosstianity" of Mrs. Baines. Her superiority to moralists and her ardent zeal to carry on the work of God as against her personal gratification raise her to the stature of a true redeemer of mankind. Undershaft is quick to recognize the divine spark in Barbara and immediately resolves to reclaim her God's purposes after furnishing her with a religion that fits the facts.

The Role of Social Critics and Intellectuals

Barbara's reforming zeal in itself is not enough ; she must be equipped with the guidance provided by the best social philosophers, thinkers and poets – men who have enormous social appetites. Undershaft therefore lusts for the soul of Cusins as well—so that with his marriage to Barbara the true trinity can be ushered in. It is only through a union with Cusins that the Shavian protagonist, Barbara-Andrew Undershaft, can hope to realize Plato's dream of uniting the makers of gunpowder with the professors of Greek. Until he is converted to Undershaftism, however, Cusins represents the play's third ineffective method of social reform, the method of "paper-apostles" and "artist-maggicians" – that of the intellectuals in general. When it is divorced from action, the talking of the intellectuals, like the preachings of the churches, Shaw insists, becomes another instrument for the subjugation of the poor. Both Barbara and Cusins, want to redeem humanity ; but as she must

learn to give up the bribe of bread and the bribe of heaven before she can succeed, so must Cusins learn to change the "oughts" of a poet into the "shalls" of a man with power. This point needs emphasis in our study of the play because neither Barbara nor Cusins is of as central importance to the meaning of the piece as is the gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft, the only true method Shaw advocates for the salvation of society.

Undershaftism

Critics have gone to the two extremes of alleging (a) Shaw's total surrender to Capitalism, (b) his absolute approval of a Marxian revolution. With particular reference to the Undershaft gospel, we may consider two questions: First, what specific remedies does Undershaft suggest to Barbara and Cusins as a way out of the present economic and religious muddle? Second, what, according to the text, would Cusins and Barbara do after they succeed to the cannon factory? The two questions together serve as pointers to the precise meaning of Shaw's "true and inspired" scripture.

Undershaft woos Cusins so that the poet, with his command of words and access to the profoundest thought, can rouse the proletariat out of their slavery and listlessness. Undershaft will equip Cusins with money and power, the two essential things required to make him and Barbara true and successful saviours. The step toward an Undershaftian revolution, therefore, is through violence. "Poverty and slavery have stood up for centuries to your sermons and leading articles", Undershaft tells Barbara and Cusins, "they will not stand up to my machine guns. Dont preach at them: dont reason with them. Kill them." The most effective ballot, he reminds them, is the one with a bullet wrapped up in it. Undershaft advocates no less than an armed revolution by the workers. The Capitalist, who himself was once a pauper, wants to form the Trinity—of "a millionaire", "a poet" and "a saviour of souls",—in order to "help" the children of the poor "to climb up beside us?"

War on War

In the sphere of national politics, Undershaft challenges Cusins to incite the workers against tyranny and oppression; on the international level, he challenges him to "make war on war". A war is started, according to Undershaft, by the capitalists to protect their own interests, but they need the workers to fight their war for them. For this purpose, the capitalists use the intellectuals as their tools. These intellectuals employ their propaganda skills to instil into the minds of the workers that it is their sacred duty to get killed in order to save their motherland. A war in defence of

capitalism is made to look like a war for the protection of the proletariat. Once the workers come to this horrible truth behind the origin of wars, Undershaft implies, they will refuse to kill each other at the commands of the capitalists and their propagandists. The "war on war" thus requires that Cusins should use his powers of rhetoric to warn the workers against this villainy of the "intellectual oligarchy" functioning as the stooges of the capitalists. This aspect of the play is essentially a Marxian vision to be accomplished largely through Cusins' efforts.

Life Force

The full meaning of the play, however, cannot be stated in terms of the Marxian or Socialist state of economic equality alone. There is a mystic or religious side to the play—and to the character of Undershaft—which is often neglected by Marxian critics. This mystic aspect of Undershaft's character is repeatedly asserted. He is no Philistine : he loves music and dancing and is according to Cusins' judgement, a sort of a poet. He does not find religion an unpleasant subject. He assures Barbara that he is a "confirmed mystic", not at all a secularist like Peter Shirley. As Shaw states in the Preface, Undershaft has a "constant sense that he is only the instrument of a Will or Life Force which uses him for purposes wider than his own." The "snare" that ultimately captivates Barbara's soul is this "mystic nexus to replace the cash nexus" in Undershaft's character. Barbara has to learn that, since all power is spiritual, she must employ her father's power to save souls. She realizes that to turn away from the wicked rich is to turn away from life Unlike her mother, she is not content with showing "disapprobation" of the wicked people for there are really no wicked people to her : all are the children of one Father. With this knowledge, Barbara returns to the colours which, Sha wsays, "may yet provide a subject for the dramatic historian of the future" since such knowledge, for the daughter of Andrew Undershaft, will clearly lead to something hopefuller than distributing bread and treacle at the expense of Bodger. It is in the capacity of such a redeemer that Barbara will complement the work of Cusins : after the workers get enough to eat and are "fullfed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures", she will strive to save their souls. What precisely does she mean by the "saving of souls ?" The "transfigured" saint of Creative Evolution explains this through her new gospel :

> Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women. When I die, let him be in my debt, not I in his ; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank.

The dialectical action of the play thus culminates in the assertion of the need for the Marxian methods to achieve a Socialist Utopia; and this Utopia must be further raised to a Creative Evolutionary heaven through the agents of the Life Force.

Conclusion

In *Major Barbara* it has been shown that Christianity can pretend to save the souls of others, only because it has sold its own soul to Bodger, Lazarus and Undershaft. Society is governed by a set of men who wield the forces of destruction; it is they who employ the largest number of men, manipulate the largest number of votes and control the largest number of newspapers. Capitalism creates poverty and disease, but it tries to remedy them by founding hospitals and endowing religious associations, which lull rebellion and help to perpetuate iniquity. The drama shows how society is dependent on rich capitalists like Lazarus and Undershaft and how absurd it is to talk of religion and independence until it can shake off the shackles of Capitalism.

23

Major Barbara : Its Style and Imagery

Introduction

The great popularity of *Major Barbara* with audiences and readers must also be attributed to its subtle methods of characterization and to its extensive use of stylistic and dramatic devices. Shaw employs all the literary art at his command to embellish its rhetoric and make it an effective vehicle for its complex philosophical content. *Major Barbara* is a typical Shavian play. It is a play of ideas, of verbal duels, of wit, satire and humour. Its characters, more or less, are well drawn. The play is well-constructed. Its three acts mark three clear-cut divisions—exposition, discussion and denouement. Though the Cockney speech in the second act—essential for the intended humour and pathos of the relevant scene—teases those readers who are not born Londoners, the play, on the whole, is a remarkable achievement of powerfully expressed convictions. Several statements are a *striking criticism of life.*

Use of Proper Names

One of the stylistic devices that Shaw employs in *Major Barbara* is the use of sonorous proper names from classical literature as well as images emphasizing size and magnitude. This he does to lend mythic proportions to his hero, Undershaft. Undershaft is referred to as father colossus, mammoth millionaire, Autolycus, Machiavelli (five times), Dionysos (twice), Mephistopheles, Prince of Darkness (four times), old demon, cunning tempter and internal old rascal (twice). Stephen's classmates tease him as "son and heir to Undershaft and Lazarus, Death and Destruction Dealers : address, Christendom and Judea." At the climactic moments of Act II, he intones "an Olympian diapason", the "trumpet of Zion," and becomes a new god descending to "possess" Cusins. At the Salvation Army march we learn that the "Prince of Darkness played his trombone like a madman : its brazen roarings were like the laughter of the damned." His power is compared by Barbara to that of an earthquake.

Portraits of Cusins and Barbara

Shaw employs similar subtle devices in the portraits of Cusins and Barbara. Cusins is consistently associated with Dionysos and Euripides. Barbara is throughout a Christ-figure: she not only repeats Jesus's words on the cross but also has her "descent" into the "hell" of the cannon factory and in the end is "transfigured" and "risen" or, as Cusins says, "gone right up into the skies." For Cusins, she is "loveliness", his "guardian angel": for her father also she is an angel or holy spirit since, he says, her "spirit" cannot "soar" until the "millstones" of poverty are lifted from her neck. This comparison of Barbara to an angel or a bird soaring in the skies brings us to another of Shaw's favourite devices of characterization, namely, the animal typing of characters.

Animal Imagery

If Barbara represents the highest state of human development —that of a virtual angel—the poor people in the Salvation Army shelter are, in contrast, dehumanized animals. Snobby is a clever "fly" and he thinks the rich are "swine". Peter Shirley eats "ravenously" and is sent by his employers to the knackers like an "old horse". His association with a horse is emphasized by a vivid stage metaphor: he sits down moodily on the edge of the "horse trough" lying on the stage. Later we learn that he has been given a job in Undershaft's factory as a gatekeeper and timekeeper but he is "frightfully miserable" because he calls timekeeping brainwork and says he is not used to it. For a "horse" like Peter Shirley, "his gate lodge is so splendid that he's ashamed to use the rooms, and skulks in the scullery." Bill Walker is a "brute", a "whelp" who talks "doggedly", a "wolf" and a "flat eared pig-nosed potwalloper." Rummy Mitchens is one of the "worms", a "pig" and a "silly old macker". At the Salvation Army meeting Jenny Hill "gibbered" with hysteria. But animal-typing is not confined to the poor only. Brainless parasites like Lomax are "eagles" feeding on a "carcase", and instead of laughing, Lomax breaks into "neighings". To the Liberal Lady Britomart, Tories are "pigheaded", while to Undershaft, an educated young man competing for scholarship is a "race-horse". Undershaft refuses to let his name be divulged at the meeting because all the charitable institutions would be down on him like "kites" on a battlefield. Cusins is a "hater" and a "shark"; Barbara gets caught in her father's "snare" and wishes for the "wings of a dove", and Undershaft's power is like that of a "tiger".

Some Other Images

The play is also rich in images of blood and destruction, military metaphors, and religious motifs like heaven and hell,

salvation and damnation, angels and devils. During the scene in Perivale St. Andrews, the stage is littered with guns and dummy soldiers "mutilated, with straw protruding from their gashes"—one lies like "grotesque corpse," and Undershaft kicks another "brutally" out of his way. The stage settings in acts II and III sharply bring out the contrast between the cold, suffering poor in the shelter and the well fed, satisfied inhabitants of the works.

Some other notable dramatic devices employed by Shaw include the use of music, especially at moments of extreme tension or excitement, and the breaking into tears of many characters (Barbara, Mrs. Baines, Peter Shirley, even Bill Walker) under great mental or spiritual pressure—a device often employed by Shaw to lend emotional substance to his characters. Undershaft's making Cusins drunk serves as the devil's baptism in Shaw's "Scripture". The spiritual affinity between the central trio is skillfully brought out through Andrew's confusion at the time of introductions in act I : he takes Cusins to be his son and immediately agrees to join Barbara's religious service. So does the incident of the bullet-proof car serve to separate the trinity from the rest. Since Sarah and Charles Lomax would not like to be seen in an unpainted car in Wilton Crescent and since Barbara does not mind what she is seen in, Cusins, Barbara and Andrew Undershaft together travel in the armoured car, symbolizing not only their spiritual kinship but also their distinctness from the respectable moralists whose philosophy of life is as vulnerable as their fashionable car.

Appearance and Reality

The theme of appearance and reality is reinforced by a repeated concern with "names" ; Snobby and Rummy have big literary names because for their parents "Bill and Sally wasnt good enough" ; Undershaft mixes the names of his children in act I ; Cusins must change his name—like all converts to a religion—to Andrew before he can succeed to the factory : Lady Britomart feels her duty is done when she has called everybody names ; Bodger buys the new name of Lord Saxmundham with pounds 5,000 ; Andrew and Cusins most often call each other by different names ; and, to dissociate "reality" from its "name", Cusins explains to Undershaft :

> The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder. Dionysos or another : what does it matter ?

Cockney Speech

In *Major Barbara* Shaw employs the auditory device of making language itself symbolize the contrast between characters at different

stages of mental and spiritual development. All the poor in the shelter speak cockney or substandard English ; the witless Lomax speaks slang while Cusins and the Undershafts speak standard English.

Through the cockney speech Shaw gives one of his many exposures of ugliness. Cockney speech is the dialect used by uneducated Londoners. Those who have a lifelong familiarity with its sounds even though they do not themselves speak in that way, will not always recognize the language of Cockneys in the spellings Shaw adopts ; and no one who is not a born Londoner could pronounce the words as—Cockneys do if Shaw's spelling were taken as the only guide. But the sole alternative would have been to use phonetic symbols, which would be even more confusing to most readers. In defence of Shaw's method it must be said that the scene (act II) would be impossible to play in 'standard' English such as is taught in schools, for both the humour and the pathos of the scene depend mainly upon the use of cockney idioms and slang which would be ludicrous and pointless if spoken in a cultured tone and with an educated accent.

Dialogue

Those who can surmount the language difficulty in Act II, however, will recognize that throughout *Major Barbara* Shaw displays a complete mastery of stage dialogue. The play is packed with intellectual discussion, yet the dialogue is so skillfully managed that the clash of ideas and convictions is more engrossing than any elaborate stage spectacle with exciting action could be ; while the wit and fun provide a barrier against dull solemnity, a state of mind which Shaw never encouraged, however serious the subject might be. Let us substantiate our argument from the following dialogue :

Cusins : You shall carry the flag down the first street, Mrs. Baines......Mr. Undershaft is a gifted trombonist ; he shall intone an Olympian diapason to the West Ham Salvation March......Blow, Machiavelli, blow...—

Barbara : Dolly : you are breaking my heart.

Cusins : What is broken heart more or less here ? Dionysos Undershaft has descended. I am possessed......Off we go. Play up, there !

x x x x x x x x

Undershaft : 'My ducats and my daughter !'

Cusins : ......Money and gunpowder !

Barbara : Drunkenness and Murder ! My God : why hast thou forsaken me ?

The exclamatory dialogue contributes to the excitement ; the syntax of logical speech has little place here. The crescendo of sound is intensified by the gathering in of themes, the drawing together of the various symbolic perspectives in which Shaw presents his fable during the course of the play. Cannon and thunder, elemental and divine, as well as the strong pulse of life, are to be heard in the beating drum.

Folklore and Fairy Tale

The world of *Major Barbara* is that of folklore and fairy tale. It is a world of inexhaustible hoards of treasure, where straw can be spun into gold and geese lay golden eggs ; a world ruled over by luck and indulgent to its favourites : the young, the beautiful, the cheerful, the quick-witted and, not the least, the hopeful stranger who carries off the prize from the legitimate heir. The conditions of the will made by Charles Lomax's father establish the genre : "if he increases his income by his own exertions, they may double the increase." They reveal a principle of economic distribution that could be called natural, though it is also familiar in Christian terms : "To him that hath shall be given" ; the proposition is that the naturally endowed are fittest to control the resources of civilized society.

24

Major Barbara : Its Plot-Construction

Two Plot Lines

Major Barbara makes an impression of considerable originality. The play involves the dramatization of an issue which is first debated, then tested through a critical experiment. *Major Barbara* may be said to mark a very late stage in the development of the thesis play. The action, as in most plays of this type, takes place in a controlled environment. The play has two plot lines, convergent, but logically independent of one another. The first centres on the question of who is to inherit the Undershaft munitions works. The second culminates in Barbara's decision to leave the Salvation Army and to take service in the arms factory.

The main action is the battle for the soul of Barbara. In this respect the play seems to be a medieval morality. The contest is won by Barbara's father, the Mephistophelean munitions magnate. Nevertheless, the plot transcends the limits of the action. It suggests the agelong struggle between God and the devil for the soul of man ; and as one might expect, it is the devil who wins.

The moral implications of the situation are of considerably greater interest than the events which generate them. *Major Barbara* is a play intended to provoke discussion, and the sentimental involvement of the characters, indispensable to a comedy designed for a wide public, are beggared by the importance of the theme. This is developed principally in two scenes—the colloquy between Undershaft and Cusins in the Salvation Army shelter, and the triangular discussion in the munitions plant in the last act. The rest of the play is no more than the dramatic armature on which these scenes are mounted.

The First Act : Exposition

The first act is mainly expository and derives humour from the ironic treatment of the return of the prodigal father to the bosom of his family. In this scene we are given all essential information concerning the strange family situation of the Undershafts in a way that is always amusing. Lady Britomart plays no great part in *Major Barbara* after the first act. She is an interesting character, but the play is not about her ; and in developing her so fully in the expository part of the play and making so little use of her thereafter, Shaw demonstrates how far he had departed by this time from the economy of the well-made play.

The issue between Barbara and her father takes shapes instantly in the first act. At the end of their discussion, Undershaft agrees to visit her army shelter provided she will come directly afterwards to see his cannon factory. These two visits comprise the action of the play.

Act Two : Development of Action

Act Two takes us to the shelter of the Salvation Army in West Ham. Its poverty and sordidness is in striking contrast with the luxury and cosy, comfortable atmosphere of the Undershaft's home in Wilton Crescent. The character of Barbara is fully developed in this scene. She is presented as an efficient organiser of her shelter, and a selfless person. She is seen as a formidable creature in her encounter with Bill Walker. The way Barbara works on his conscience makes the greatest impression on Bill Walker as well as on us.

Act Two reflects the conflict of ideas. Undershaft and Cusins did not talk much in Act One, but now they make up for it. Beneath the debate between Undershaft and Cusins it is obvious that the two men feel a strong attraction towards one another, so that we are not surprised to find Adolphus marching away with Undershaft at the end of the Act, and later in the play taking over the cannon business from him.

In this act we have also the first glimpse of Barbara's disillusionment, one of the themes of the play.

Climax

The climax of the play lies in Undershaft's offer of pounds 5,000 to keep the shelter working during the winter. Barbara is shocked when Mrs. Baines accepts the offer. She is completely disillusioned, she is even deserted by Cusins. She is so dispirited

that she cannot go to the big meeting and she feels that she may never pray again. Act Two ends with Barbara's very near defeat. Sh is forced to face the fact that Snobby Price is a fraud and that she has lost the chance of converting Bill Walker. It is not surprising that when we next see her she has discarded her Salvation Army uniform.

Denouement

Act Three is again laid in the library of Lady Britomart in Wilton Crescent, and it also opens with light talk like a drawing ro n social comedy. From the Wilton Crescent the scene shifts to Ui lershaft's model town and cannon foundry in the Parish of Perivale St. Andrews. In the final act Undershaft reminds Lady Britomart of the Undershaft tradition of the inheritance, and the chief dramatic action of this scene concerns its disposal. Cusins is found to be a foundling, and he inherits the cannon factory. Contrary to expectations, Barbara is glad at this development that Cusins has accepted the offer, because this will give her an opportunity to work among his father's well-fed and contended workmen and try to save their souls. It would be a more difficult task, for they cannot be bribed "by the bribe of bread and the bribe of Heaven." The denouncement lies in Barbara's determination to be Major Barbara again and to die "with the colors".

The dramatic crisis, towards which the play moves, is related to the action of Barbara Undershaft, grand-daughter of the Earl of Stevenage, daughter of a millionaire capitalist, leaving the established church of the established social order to join the Salvation Army. The inheritance of power (the 'destructive arms') is kept in the family through the resolution and audacity of her fiance, who makes his pact with 'Dionysos Undershaft'. The 'transfiguration' which ensues has its appropriate setting in the Garden City of Perivale St. Andrews, blueprint for the millennium of social welfare, and its individual enactment in Barbara's change of mood : 'She has gone right up into the skies,' says Cusins.

Structure

To the opposition between Undershaft and Barbara there has been added an independent opposition between Undershaft and Cusins. Of course, these are various examples of a single basic conflict between idealism and realism. But the placing of the two in the progress of the drama must absolve Shaw from any charge of tautology : Barbara, the indubitable protagonist of Act Two, subsides into watchfulness in Act Three, while Cusins takes over from her, is put to the test and makes the crucial decision ; her endorsement of this in the last moments of the play leads strength to the impression that he has indeed been deputizing for her. It is

dramatically necessary, after her defeat by Undershaft in Act Two, that the initiative should pass from Barbara. Cusins carries the play into its final movement, as he makes his pact with Undershaft. This has the effect of restoring Barbara to her proper centrality, though now in alliance with her former opponents. As the representative of spirituality, she returns to inform and bless the compact between reason and energy and the paradox of good in evil, heaven in hell.

The peculiarly Shavian variety of Ibsenite dramatic structure, imitated from the Platonic dialogues, is evident in the verbal debates, rationally conceived and conducted to a great extent—especially in the last act—in abstract terms. This is the drama of ideas in exemplary form. But there is much more to the play than this The realism of its settings—the library in Wilton Crescent, the Salvation Army shelter in Canning Town, and the especially topical Garden City—establishes it as a critique of actual society that reveals the spectrum of class and its cruel contrasts. Changes of setting are matched by changes in dramatic style. Wealth, aristocracy and the culture that goes with them play out a comedy of manners in Act One ; Dickensian realism verging on melodrama invades Act Two, in the Salvation Army Shelter, bare and chill, with its horse-trough as derisive comment on the poorly dressed wretches at their free meal ; Act Three presents a Utopia designed by contemporary paternalism.

Defects

There are certain obscurities in the play. We are not told what took Barbara, the daughter of a millionaire and the granddaughter of an earl, into the commissioned ranks of the Salvation Army. Some powerful force must have possessed Barbara's spirit to make her leave her fashionable home in Wilton Crescent and live in an Army shelter in West Ham. We are left to surmise what it was.

Furthermore, Barbara's ignorance of her father, apart from her knowledge of his trade, is implausible. Would not a girl of her character and disposition have made at least one effort to redeem this stupendous sinner ?

All the defects in the first and third acts, however, are made to seem trivial by the vivacity and vigour of the second which is full of veracious character and moving action. But the faults are minor as compared to the play's overall greatness.

25

Characterization in Major Barbara

Characters Defined

Characters are the persons, in a dramatic or narrative work, endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say—the *dialogue*—and what they do—the *action*. The grounds in a character's temperament and moral nature for his speech and actions constitute his motivation. A character may remain essentially "stable" or unchanged in his outlook and dispositions, from beginning to end of a work—such as Prospero in *The Tempest*. and Micawber in *David Copperfield* or he may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual development or as a result of an extreme crisis—for example Shakespeare's King Lear, and Pip in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Whether he remains stable or changes, we require 'consistency' in a character—he should not suddenly break off and act in a way not plausibly grounded in his temperament as we already have come to know of it.

E. M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), introduced popular new terms and made distinction between flat and round characters. A flat character is also called a type or "two-dimensional", and is built around "a single idea or quality" and is presented in outline and without much individualizing detail, and so can be fairly adequately described in a single phrase or sentence. A round character is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity ; thus he is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and, like most people, he is capable of surprising us.

Flat Characters or 'Types'

Major Barbara and *Caesar and Cleopatra* are said to be the only plays by Shaw in which there is any development of character. In

all his other plays, the characters are static : exactly the same at the end of the play as they were at the beginning. But what do we mean by development or evolution of character ? Is it a change of nature or a change of opinion ? Human beings are rarely changed suddenly and entirely. Those who believe, as Shaw appears to believe in this play, that a person can completely disrupt himself in less than an hour, as Bill Walker does, are believers in magic and fairy tales. Shaw resorts to the animal-typing of characters in *Major Barbara.* The poor people in the Salvation Army shelter are dehumanized animals. Snobby is a clever 'fly' ; Peter Shirley eats 'ravenously' ; Bill Walker is a 'brute', a 'whelp', and a 'wolf'. Rummy Mitchens is one of the 'worms', a 'pig' and a 'silly old macker'. Lomax breaks into 'neighings'.

Again, both Lady Britomart and Undershaft are types ; Lady Britomart represents the idiosyncracies of the ladies of upper class aristocratic society, and Undershaft is a typical shrewd businessman.

Memorable Characters

It is the characterization that saves the play. The personages in *Major Barbara* are memorable. Barbara, as the archetypal idealist, would be particularly vulnerable to ironic treatment, but Shaw portrays her without a trace of malice. Her power manifests the cosmic force that drives her ; and to the extent that she is driven, she is mad. Her lover, Adolphus Cusins, is equally mad in his way, and her father, the empire builder, willingly admits his own irrationality. All three—the poet, the millionaire, and the evangelist—are excessive characters acting under the spell of a force that transcends reason. They move among men therefore with the conscious grace of superior beings.

Round Characters

Major Barbara, Cusins, Stephen and even Undershaft are developing characters. What they are at the beginning of the play are not at the end. There is complete transfiguration in the character of Barbara. Cusins also changes a lot. Stephen too undergoes a change and moulds his opinion about his father. Though Undershaft is a static character, very much ingrained in his opinions and convictions, yet he shows a bit of flexibility in his dealings with Barbara and Cusins. He accepts the plea that Cusins is a foundling with a view to making him his heir.

Human Beings

While *Major Barbara* is seriously concerned with social and religious questions, it follows Shaw's invariable principle and practice of presenting the material entertainingly in terms of effectiveness on

the stage. The characters are human beings in their own right, speaking their own language, and not serving simply as mouthpieces for the expression of Shaw's ideas and opinions. The characteristics of the Salvation Army are more than illustrated ; they are brought to life and fully fashioned : earnestness and ecstasy in Barbara ; courage in Jenny Hill ; hard practical sense in Mrs Baines ; exuberance in Adolphus Cusins.

Barbara

Shaw presents Barbara as young. She has the moral fervour of youth, and she does what she can to spread the gospel from her headquarters in a miserable shelter in the East End. Her father easily demonstrates what should have been at once evident to a less innocent militant, that a philanthropic organization depends for its existence on the social system under which it operates. When Barbara understands at last that her beloved Army is, at bottom, a poorly subsidized instrument of middle-class capitalism, designed mainly to keep the poor in order, she indignantly resigns her commission. For a time she is plunged into moral and emotional bankruptcy, but this existentialist crisis lasts scarcely a day. The next morning she visits her father's arms factory at St. Andrew's and there she finds faith and work, and a surer way to salvation. Thus the major action of the play depicts a discovery and a reversal, in the course of which Barbara turns from the service of the Christian God to the service of his demonic counterpart, and thus becomes a devil's disciple.

Undershaft

Similarly the characterization of Undershaft is quite simple. He is neither benevolent nor philanthropic. He is a merchant of death. His factories thrive on bloodshed and are dedicated to the idea of making war profitable. To this end he keeps his labour-supply stable by making his workers happy, not through visions of a better life in the future, but by the tangible realities of a good life in the present. The contrast between the agreeable living arrangements of the Undershaft factories and the squalor of the West Ham Salvation Army shelter is only too apparent.

Andrew Undershaft, whom Shaw calls the hero of *Major Barbara*, is on first acquaintance oddly unlike what a Shavian hero might be expected to be. He advocates principles which Shaw would have been reluctant to put forward as his own, and in that respect Undershaft is created as an independent character. He had what Shaw no doubt regarded as a heroic virtue : namely, the determination to go to any length to raise himself from the foul trough of poverty and to save others from it. He reminds Barbara that he saved her soul, just as he saves the souls of workers.

Undershaft often sounds like a heartless and conscienceless devil's advocate. He is in fact a merciless realist who will not encourage either illusion or pretentious folly, however innocent.

Cusins

It was largely the character of Cusins that led Shaw to centre his religious play upon the Salvation Army. He speaks in the Preface of "the Salvationist, repudiating gaiety and courting effort and sacrifice, yet always in the wildest spirits, laughing, joking, singing, rejoicing, drumming, and tambourining : his life flying by in a flesh of excitement." But Cusins is far from being a complete Salvationist, or even a typical Christian. He was modelled in part on Shaw's friend Gilbert Murray, for many years Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford.

The characterization of Cusins is enthusiastic, but apart from his single-minded devotion to Barbara, he remains mysteriously aloof from the action ; he appears to be a young man deeply concerned with matters that have nothing to do with the play. Like most classical scholars he talks shop a good deal. It is in these touches that the character of Cusins has been successfully delineated.

Conclusion

The canvass of *Major Barbara* is not a crowded one. There are only three principal characters—Barbara, Undershaft and Cusins—and the discussion between them is the conflict of their ideas, and this forms the core of the play. Besides these major characters, there are also a number of minor characters. But Shaw's art of characterization is such that even these minor characters have become amazingly alive in the play. They impart variety to the incidents, serve to fill up the canvass, and give us a sense of the larger life that goes on outside the play.

26

Major Characters in Major Barbara

(1) MAJOR BARBARA

Her Personality

Barbara is a lively, robust and energetic woman. She is intelligent, attractive, thoughtful and conscientious. Shaw obviously loves her. The entire action is on her shoulders. Though she is not the largest character, yet she is the protagonist, the heroine of the play. She has endeared herself to all readers of Shaw because of her characteristic qualities : she is all sincerity, christian love and charity, devotion, pity and sympathy, tact and intelligence. She is one of the most lovable of stage-women, despite all her talk, that ever a dramatist conceived. She is a spiritual beauty. She regards all human beings as children of one Father, and believes in true religion as the basis of all society ; while her father believes only in power—and especially in the power of big business to rule society.

Barbara is the daughter of the chief partner in the biggest cannon-manufactory in the world. Her mother is a lady of birth and position. When the play begins, we find that she is already a prominent officer in the Salvation Army. She is engaged to Cusins, a Professor of Greek, who fell in love with her and proposed under the impression that she was an ordinary Salvation Army lass.

Deeply Religious

Barbara is a woman of the most refined sensibilities and deep religious convictions, whose only occupation is to save the souls of others. Propelled by the religious zeal, she joins the Salvation Army, discharges her maid and starts living frugally on a pound a week. Lady Britomart is afraid that Barbara would create difficulties regarding the visit of her father. But to our great surprise she does not object to his visit at all. Rather, she welcomes it. She

says : "My father has a soul to be saved, like anybody", and his visit will give her an opportunity of saving his soul. This incident highlights her deeplv religious nature.

Her Fatal Discovery

But it is her father's tainted money that has brought her up and given her not only education but also leisure to think about spiritual things and carry on her missionary propaganda. Undershaft reminds Barbara of this, saying :

> I fed you and clothed you and housed you. I took care that you should have money enough to live handsomely —more than enough ; so that you could be wasteful, careless, generous. That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins ..I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara ; and I saved your soul from the crime of poverty.

Barbara is revolted and bewildered. She makes the fatal discovery that even virtue is a parasite on sin, the sin of Capitalism.

It is the most sublime thing in the drama, this discovery by an individual of her utter dependence on the corrupt social organism. Salvation itself is utterly dependent on devildom. The tragedy of Major Barbara consists in the realization of this utter helplessness of the individual. When she makes the tragic discovery, she cries out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" When she finds that the temple of God has to be built by Mammon, that the seven deadly sins have to be conquered by money, she feels that the whole world is fast receding from beneath her feet. For as a Christian missionary, has she not preached against riches and said that a man cannot serve both God and Mammon ?

Her Disillusionment

Barbara is seen as a formidable creature in her encounter with Bill Walker, the ruffian, who comes to the Salvation Army shelter to take away his girl, who has been recently converted. And when one of the Salvation lasses tells him she has gone away, he hits her in the mouth. Now, this blow very nearly brings about his own conversion ; for Jenny Hill does not resent it, and Major Barbara takes advantage of the shame which begins to stir in him to make him more and more uncomfortable. His impulse is to buy back his peace of mind and self-respect by getting thrashed by his girl's new Salvation Army 'bloke', and failing in this, he offers Jenny a sovereign. Barbara tells him he cannot buy his salvation ; she wants to touch his heart, and if he were to think he had made amends, he would go away as stupid and brutal as he came. Her father all the while watches this soul saving process with grim sympathy. Then comes

his chance when he offers pounds 5,000, for the shelter will have to be closed if the funds are not forthcoming. But Barbara refuses to accept her father's money, because his money is tainted. She wants her father to give up manufacturing the means of death. But the Army does not attach so much importance to the saving of Undershaft's soul as to the power his money will give them to help many others. So Mrs. Baines accepts the money. This is a terrible shock to Barbara, who realises for the first time that the power of the Army rests ultimately on the support of its worst enemies.

Major Barbara has yet another shock to get over. She discovers that not only are religious organizations dependent on the charity of the rich who have earned money by fair means and foul, but even an individual can have no religion so long as he is poor. Poverty keeps the soul open to temptations. Snobby Price makes professions of repentance, invents confession to get the wherewithal to satisfy his hunger, and then steals a sovereign at the earliest opportunity that offers itself. This acts as an eye opener to Major Barbara, who realizes that there can be no religion where men are not full fed. She is in a state of spiritual desperation. Her religious professions have been proved to be hollow; her pride has been wounded but not killed.

Her Transformation

Barbara ultimately resolves to go to her father's works, where she will get—

> not weak souls in starved bodies, crying with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, but full fed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their rights and dignities.

She cannot be bought, but the institution she belongs to clutches eagerly at the money, so she leaves it and relinquishes her belief in a God of mercy and humility : he cannot save the world. His is the religion of pride and self-reliance, of which the first commandment is, be strong, and therefore rich ; since force decides at last what kind of men will shape the world in their own image, So she decides to work in the cannon factory of her father. "That is where salvation is really needed," and that is where salvation gets a fair chance and fair play. There her father and other rich capitalists will not be able to throw it in her face that her converts are bribed with bread. Her last speech is paean of her new religion :

> I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women. When I die, let him be in my debt, not I in his ; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank.

Turns From Illusion to Reality

The way of life, as at last Barbara sees it, lies through the factory of death :

> Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow.

She further says :

> I was happy in the Salvation Army for a moment. I escaped from the world into a paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul-saving ; but the moment our money ran short, it all came back to Bodger : it was he who saved our people ; he and the Prince of Darkness, my papa. Undershaft and Bodger : their hands stretch everywhere : when we feed a starving fellow creature it is with their bread, because there is no other bread ; when we tend the sick it is in the hospitals they endow ; if we turn from the churches they build we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life.

Major Barbara's conversion is thus a matter of turning from illusion to reality. When her ideals are shattered, she is forced to a realistic appraisal of the facts, the necessary preliminary to a course of effective action. A comparison of her father's works with those of the Army in which she has served forces the realization that the salvation of humanity as it is presently constituted lies not in the rejection of material values, but in their acceptance. For Barbara this idea opens a new career of evangelism. Henceforth, her work will be done among the strong, not the weak.

Conclusion

The play ends with Barbara having regained her confidence. She accepts her father's challenge to save the souls of his well-fed workers whose souls are hungry because their bodies are full. She tells Cusins that her courage has come back and that Major Barbara "will die with colors". She has come in contact with reality ; her illusions have been shed ; she has matured. She has realised that "evil cannot be cured by turning our back upon any side of life." She declares that "There is no wicked side : life is all one."

(2) SIR ANDREW UNDERSHAFT

His Personality

Shaw describes the personality of Andrew Undershaft in the following words : "Andrew is, on the surface, a stoutish, easygoing elderly man, with kindly patient manners, and an engaging simplicity

of character. But he has a watchful, deliberate, waiting, listening face, and formidable reserves of power, both bodily and mental, in his capacious chest and long head. His gentleness is partly that of a strong man who has learnt by experience that his natural grip hurts ordinary people unless he handles them very carefully, and partly the mellowness of age and success." Undershaft is the largest figure in the play. He is the husband of Lady Britomart and the father of Barbara, the heroine of the play. He dominates the entire action of the play : in fact the play centres round the conflict of his ideas with those of Barbara, and he has the last word in the play.

His Estrangement With Lady Britomart

Andrew Undershaft appears in the middle of Act One. Before he appears on the stage, we are told about his past and about the Undershaft tradition. Lady Britomart tells us that Undershaft is a foundling and that one of the reasons she separated from him was his insistence on adhering to the tradition that the Undershaft business should descend to another foundling, which would cut out Stephen from the inheritance. Lady Britomart and Undershaft have been separated for such a long time that he is unable to recognize his children, or even to remember their exact number.

A Realist

Andrew Undershaft is a realist. With invincible logic he attacks the conventional views of religion, poverty, salvation, crime, war and a host of other subjects. He is neither a hypocrite nor a romanticist. He lives in a world of reality and not in a world of illusions. He appears to be the spokesman of Shaw to puncture the bubble of romantic illusions. Talking about Undershaft's unhypocritical cast of mind, Lady Britomart says :

> But your father didnt exactly do wrong things : he said them and thought them : that was what was so dreadful. He really had a sort of religion of wrongness...I couldnt forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality.

His History

Andrew Undershaft is a millionaire. The first to bear that name was a foundling left on the steps of the church of St. Andrew Undershaft, so called, it is said, because of the Maypole (a pole erected for dancing round on Mayday) customarily set up in front of it in the spring. The munitions works which the first Undershaft established has since been handed down, together with his name, to a succession of foundlings, each of whom has

selected and adopted his successor for reasons of aptitude alone. The present incumbent is the seventh in the line of succession.

Unashamed

Andrew Undershaft is a dealer in death and destruction. He thrives on war. He is jubilant when he learns that the new aerial battleship wiped out a fort containing three hundred soldiers at its first trial. He is proud of his business and his money. Barbara may regard his money as the tainted money, but he has no such notions. He is equally proud of his weapons, which are the best. His motto is "Unashamed" and he is not ashamed of the fact that he sells his weapons to all without taking into consideration the right and wrong of their causes. He rather insists that one who inherits his business must follow his principle. His motto as well be "Blood and Fire"—the motto of the Salvation Army—for, as he proudly claims, his sort of blood also cleanses and his sort of fire also purifies.

A Miracle of Nature

Undershaft is one of Shaw's authentic masterpieces. Shaw perhaps did not understand Cusins very well. He understood Undershaft as well as he understood himself. The self-made millionaire presents a new aspect of the Shavian hero—the poet as captain of industry. In Shaw's conception this figure is necessarily mystical in character and satanic in mood. Like Dick Dudgeon, he is essentially a romantic figure, a glamorous brigand in the service of a higher power. Like Caesar, he is both Machiavellian and simple-hearted, at the same time majestic and genuinely humble. An aristocrat without traceable lineage, he appears to have sprung full-armed from the brow of Zeus, without the usual biological amenities. He is, like Shaw, a miracle of nature.

A Source of Power

Undershaft's kingdom is wholly of this world. He is wise and, without formal schooling, learned. He is strong with the energy of the earth. He is, in short, Dionysian ; and it is this quality that recommends him to Cusins. Through Undershaft, Cusins at last makes connection with the life-current that has eluded him in his academic cloister. "What drives this place", Undershaft remarks as he proudly displays his cannon factory, "is a will of which I am a part." Henceforth, we are to understand, Cusins also will be part of this will.

Undershaft is a source of power. His function in the body politic corresponds to that of the intermediary faculty described in

the *Republic* of Plato, the pugnacious faculty which may be exerted in accordance with the dictates of the higher or the lower faculties of the soul depending on which is in control of the organism. His motto, "Unashamed" indicates his neutrality as a provider of weapons to all who desire them. But Undershaft is not really neutral. Underlying his motto is the gospel of the sixth Undershaft : "Nothing is ever done in this world until men are prepared to kill one another if it is not done" ; and his sense of moral justice is evidenced by his choice of Barbara as the priestess of the house of power. Cusins, the future Undershaft, is necessarily committed to the forging of weapons ; but Barbara, presumably, will know what must be done if humanity is to be saved, and it is into her hands that Undershaft entrusts the spiritual direction of his works.

His Views on Poverty

Undershaft's own experiences have taught him that poverty is the worst of crimes. He speaks for Shaw when he tells Barbara :

> Poverty blights whole cities : spreads horrible pestilence ; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing : a murder here, and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then : what do they matter ? They are only the accidents and illnesses of life : there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill-fed, ill-clothed people. They poison us morally and physically : they kill the happiness of society : they force us to do away with our liberties and to organise unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss. Only fools fear crime : we all fear poverty.

He advocates that poverty must be eradicated at all costs. His own money may be regarded as tainted, but it enables him to keep his workers clean, respectable and well-fed. He thus saves them from the "crime of poverty", and he is proud of the fact.

Undershaft describes the seven deadly sins : food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, repectability and children. Nothing, he says, "can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money ; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted." He tells Barbara :

> You talk of your half-saved ruffian in West Ham ; you accuse me of dragging his soul back to perdition. Well, bring him to me here and I will drag his soul back to salvation for you. Not by words and dreams ; but by

> thirty eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job. In three weeks he will have a fancy waistcoat; in three months a tall hat and a chapel sitting; before the end of the year he will shake hands with a duchess at a Primrose League meeting, and join the Conservative Party.

"And will he be the better for that?" Barbara demands. "You know he will", her father retorts:

> Don't be a hypocrite, Barbara. He will be better fed, better housed, better clothed, better behaved; and his children will be pounds heavier and bigger. That will be better than an American cloth matteress in a shelter, chopping firewood, eating bread and treacle, and being forced to kneel down from time to time to thank heaven for it: knee drill, I think you call it. It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms. Try your hand on my men: their souls are empty because their bodies are full.

The Real Ruler

Undershaft tells his son Stephen that he and his like are the real rulers of the country;

> I am the government of our country. I and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus? No, my friend: you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesnt. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman...

To think that the Parliament governs the country is a romantic illusion; the real rulers are the big houses who control the press and the politicians.

His Views on Religion

Undershaft wants the outdated and outmoded religion to be changed. He advocates moral reforms. He says that when their machinery becomes outdated and worn out they scrap it. Similarly their religion and morality have outlived their utility, but they still cling to them. They are not prepared to change their ideas, ideals, social customs and traditions, however obsolete they might have grown. He points out :

> Well, you have made for yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesnt fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it and get one that does fit. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos ; but it wont scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What is the result ? In machinery it does very well ; but in morals and religion and politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year. Dont persist in that folly. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and better one for tomorrow.

A Paradox

Undershaft is a paradox. He is, precisely like Shaw, both capitalist and socialist, both egotist and altruist, and he is also original in being a disconcertingly honest man. His views accordingly involve a contradiction which can be resolved only on a higher dialectical plane. As an individual, Undershaft is ruthless and selfish ; as an antagonist he is formidable. But the universal Undershaft is the hope of mankind. When all men are like Undershaft, honest and explicit in the assertion of their desire, and determined to do their best for themselves, poverty and slavery will no longer be possible, for no man will tolerate subjection. Undershaft militant is a danger to all the world, but Undershaft triumphant is a benevolent deity shared by all, the very spirit of evolving mankind.

Undershaft is a slum boy, reared in that wilderness of desolation that was East London in the middle of the nineteenth century. He has, like all the members of his dynasty, assumed the name of the firm's founder, an abandoned orphan reared in the parish of St. Andrew Undershaft in the city. Determined to escape from the indignities of poverty, he has taken for his own the stern old Scots slogan : "Thou shalt starve ere I starve."

Here another paradox appears, for as a socialist we expect Shaw especially to condemn this spirit. But he condones it and even insists that for a poor person it is indeed the only possible "manly" attitude. (Undershaft's Christian name, "Andrew", means "manly"). For Shaw, the great cardinal virtues are courage and self-respect, and he believed that if the poor in a democracy let themselves be exploited, starved, and snubbed, it is only because of their own inveterate abjectness. Hence the cutting remarks which Undershaft, the ex-slum boy, addresses to Peter Shirley, the down-trodden, long-suffering worker, in the Salvation Army Shelter :

Shirley : *(angrily)* Who made your millions for you ? Me and my like. What kep us poor ? Keepin you rich. I wouldn't have your conscience, not for all your income.

Undershaft : I wouldn't have your income, not for all your conscience, Mr. Shirley.

Undershaft is driving home the point that a mere conviction of moral superiority is in itself the hollowest of consolations, the last resource of the weak and cowardly. Honour, justice, and truth are indeed part of Undershaft's religion, but he stresses that these can be had only as the "graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life." Any liberal like Cusins who preaches these virtues to the poor without taking into account economic realities is a fool.

His Belief in Money and Gunpowder

Undershaft's religion is militant in an extreme degree, and in this regard he is in complete accord with the Salvation Army. Undershaft desires to devote his energies to the destruction of evil, but he has no faith in the weapons of the Prince of Peace, nor has he time to use them. It is his faith, he tells Cusins, that there are two things necessary to Salvation :

Undershaft : The two things are—

Cusins : Baptism and—

Undershaft : No. Money and gunpowder.

Cusins : *(surprised, but interested)* That is the general opinion of our governing classes. The novelty is in hearing any man confess it.

Undershaft : Just so.

Cusins : Excuse me : is there any place in your religion for honor, justice, truth ,love, mercy and so forth ?

Undershaft : Yes : they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, stong, and safe life...

Conclusion

The character of Underhaft is one of the prime achievements of Shaw as a playwright. To lend mythic proportions to his hero, Shaw employs sonorous proper names from classical literature as well images emphasising size and magnitude. Undershaft is referred to as father colossus, mammoth millionaire, Machiavelli, Dionysos, Mephistopheles, Prince of Darkness, old demon, cunning tempter. All these titles given to Undershaft are appropriate, because he is an amalgamation of many qualities ; his personality has many facets. He has initiative, originality, intelligence and determination.

(3) ADOLPHUS CUSINS

His Personality

Cusins is a poor professor of Greek. He has no other source of income except what he earns by teaching Greek—and that is not much. Shaw introduces him in the following words :

> Cusins is a spectacled student, slight, thin haired, and sweet voiced, with a more complex form of Lomax's complaint. His sense of humor is intellecutal and subtle, and is complicated by an appalling temper The life-long struggle of a benevolent temperament and a high conscience against impulses of inhuman ridicule and fierce impatience has set up a chronic strain which has visibly wrecked his constitution. He is a most implaccable, determined, tenacious, intolerant person who by mere force of character presents himself as—and indeed actually is—considerate, gentle, explanatory, even mild and apologetic, capable possibly of murder, but not of cruelty, or coarseness. By the operation of some instinct which is not merciful enough to blind him with the illusions of love, he is obstinately bent on marrying Barbara.

Portrait of Murray

It is generally said that Cusins is a very good and sympathetic, though comic, portrait of Professor Gilbert Murray. It was easy for Shaw to make Cusins attractive as well as plausible. He had only to take one look at Murray and the job was done. In writing to Gilbert Murray, Shaw pointed out that he had taken pains to make his professor "the reverse in every point of the theatrical strong man."

> I want him to go on his quality wholly, and not to make the smallest show of physical robustness or brute determination. His selection by Undershaft should be a standing puzzle to the people who believe in the strong-silent still-waters-run-deep hero of melodrama. The very name Adolphus Cusins is selected to that end.

In choosing Murray as his model, Shaw had in mind a type of liberal in strong contrast to the active, bustling Lady Britomart. Cusins is the academic, cloistered, sympathetic, skeptical, ironic, supercivilized liberal who shrinks instinctively from what E. M. Forster has called the world of "telegrams and anger".

Murray's liberalism sprang from several sources—from the radicalism of Castle Howard, from his Irish rebel background, and from a strain of Shelleyan humanitarianism that made him, like Shaw, vegetarian and a hater of all forms of cruelty. The other side of the picture was his Hellenism. For Murray, Greek literature was a living force having direct bearing on modern politics, morals, and culture. Here is how he writes of Euripides, the Greek playwright to whom he felt especially drawn :

> His contemporary public denounced him as dull, because he tortured them with personal problems ; as malignant, because he made them see truths they wished not to see ; as blasphemous and foul-minded, because he made demands on their spiritual and religious natures which they could neither satisfy nor overlook.

In short Murray regarded Euripides as standing in relation to the golden age of Athens as the 'New Drama' of Shaw and Ibsen stood in relation to the age of Victoria and Edward VII. In *Major Barbara* Shaw makes Undershaft give Cusins the nickname "Euripides", thus implying that he looks on human affairs with the same mixture of ironic pessimism and pity as his Greek predecessor.

According to A. C. Ward, Cusins "was modelled in part on Shaw's friend Gilbert Murray, for many years Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford, who was in fact a rationalist, not an orthodox Christian believer. He became famous as the translator of many of the ancient Greek plays, and his English version of *The Bacchae* of Euripides—quoted from in *Major Barbara*—no doubt gave Shaw the notion of presenting him as Cusins, an enthusiastic follower of the Salvation Army, in whose religion—inspiring them to march 'to fight the devil with trumpet and drum, with music and dancing, with banner and palm'—he finds resemblances to the Greek worship of Dionysos, who is described by Murray in the introduction to *The Bacchae* as 'a God of

Intoxication, of Inspiration, a giver of superhuman or immortal life.' That Shaw valued religion according to its power to provide inspiration and spiritual intoxication is shown more particularly in a later comedy, *Fanny's First Play* (1911)."

Shaw acknowledges his debt to Murray in a note placed before the Preface :

> The Euripidean verses in the second act of *Major Barbara* are not by me, nor even directly by Euripides. They are by Professor Gilbert Murray, whose English version of *The Bacchae* came into our dramatic literature with all the impulsive power of an original work shortly before *Major Barbara* was begun. The play, indeed, stands indebted to him in more ways than one.

The last sentence is generally supposed to allude to the portrayal of Murray in the character of Cusins.

A Profound Greek Scholar

Cusins is a profound Greek scholar. He advises Undershaft :

> Let me advise you to study Greek, Mr. Undershaft. Greek scholars are privileged men. Few of them know Greek ; and none of them knows anything else ; but their position is unchallengeable. Other languages are the qualifications of writers and commercial travellers : Greek is to a man of position what the hallmark is to silver.

His willingness to accept Undershaft's offer to make him his heir is determined to a large extent by his telling him :

> Plato says, my friend, that society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek.

What Cusins is saying is that the salvation of the world depends on the union of scholarly idealism and practical realism. He accepts Undershaft's offer because in this way he will get power enough to transfer the world to his idealism. He has sold his soul for power, but he does not want power for himself, but for the world.

Practical and Clear-Headed

Cusins is practical and clear-headed. He knows that the power which the cannon factory will provide him is the power to deal out

death and destruction. But he also knows that the spiritual power can also be misused. He tells Barbara :

> You cannot have power for good without having power for evil too. Even mother's milk nourishes murderers as well as heroes. This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic, religious power. that can slave men's souls. As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyers, the doctors, the priests, the literary men, the professors, the artists, and the politicians who, once in authority, are more disastrous and tyrannical than all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a power simple enough for common men to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good.

Hates Intellectual Exploitation

Cusins hates intellectual exploitation, which makes even religion and education wicked He tells Barbara : "I admitted this when the Turks and Greeks were last at war. My best pupil went out to fight for Hellas. My parting gift to him was not a copy of Plato's *Republic*, but a revolver and a hundred Undershaft cartridges. The blood of every Turk he shot—if he shot any—is on my head as well as on Undershaft's. That act committed me to this place for ever. Your father's challenge has beaten me. Dare I make war on war ? I dare. I must. I will."

His Love For Barbara

Cusins loves Barbara, and it is for her sake that he joined the Salvation Army. Now when he accepts Undershaft's challenge and agrees to become his partner in his cannon factory, he thinks that Barbara will not marry him. But his happiness knows no bounds when Barbara tells him that she too has been converted, that she too has accepted Undershaft's challenge to convert his well-fed work-men.

Conclusion

The characterization of Cusins is enthusiastic, but apart from his single-minded devotion to Barbara, he remains mysteriously aloof from the action : he appears to be a young man deeply concerned with matters that have nothing to do with the play. Like most

classical scholars he talks shop a great deal. Cusins is witty, ironic, and sensitive. In the scene in which he haggles with his Mephistophelean adversary over the terms of his proposed servitude, he exhibits a precocious insight into the methods of the bazaar, but one imagines he would have done better to postpone the negotiations until after he had decided to sell his soul.

Cusins acts as a chorus as he stands between Undershaft and Barbara, commenting on each and interpreting their religious conflict to the audience—a perfectly natural thing for a "collector of religions" to do. According to Margery M. Morgan:

> I think we can assume that Cusins was at first envisaged as playing a minor, a choric, role... : that of an observer and commentator who also sets the comic tone of the drama. In his character of observer, the Professor of Greek is qualified to identify for us the philosophical issues and the mythopoetic analogues as they arise. His intellectual quality does not entirely obscure the lineaments of the clown ; but he plays the ironical fool to Lomax's 'natural'. As a more considerable and distinguished member of society, he is also fitted to become one of the main pivots of the dramatic scheme.

(4) STEPHEN

His Personality

Stephen is the only son of Lady Britomart. Shaw introduces him in the following words :

> Her son, Stephen, comes in. He is a gravely correct young man under 25, taking himself very seriously, but still in some awe of his mother, from childish habit and bachelor shyness rather than from any weakness of character.

We find that he is constantly snubbed by his mother. She accuses him fiddling first with his "tie", then with his "chain". Lady Britomart treats him as a child. As the play opens we find Lady Britomart talking to him and seeking his advice as how she can manage the family affairs, which are getting out of hands. But Stephen is unable to rise to the occasion and tender any advice. The reason is that his authoritative mother has suppressed his individuality and rendered him incapable of any initiative.

G. E. Brown's Views

According to G. E. Brown, "Stephen is a very wooden figure who is only in the play for the requirements of the plot. He has no

real individuality and his function is to be on the receiving end of Undershaft's wit or to be the object of Lady Britomart's manoeuvrings. However, the role provides the actor with a great opportunity in the early part of Act Three when he occupies the centre of the stage while discussing his future with his father. His pomposity and the way in which he is convinced he is right on all occasions cause us, in a way, to admire his courage even though we cannot share his opinions. The scene shows him standing up to Undershaft and in the course of their conversation Shaw is able to point out what great prejudices existed in England at the time the play was written and how a conviction of being born to rule, held by those in high places, often masked incompetence."

Prig and Moral Pedant

Stephen is a conscientious, thoroughly well-intentioned prig and moral pedant, tediously prating about "right" being "right" and "wrong" being "wrong". When Stephen, having enumerated the professions he is unqualified to enter, is asked by his father : "Well, come, is there anthing you know or care for ?" Stephen replies :

> I know the difference between right and wrong.

And Undershaft '*hugely tickled*' replies :

> You dont say so ! What ! no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy ; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists : the secret of right and wrong. Why, man, youre a genius, a master of masters, a god ! At twenty-four, too !

Stephen keeps his temper with difficulty and retorts :

> You are pleased to be facetious. I pretend to nothing more than any honorable English gentleman claims as his birth-right.

His Maturity

Stephen of Act III is a mature young man and not the helpless and dependent boy of Act I. In Act III he stands up to his father, and does not hesitate to express his views, though we may not agree with his views. Earlier his mother could snub him as a child, but now if somebody snubs him, he shows his resentment and refuses to be insulted. This indicates that Stephen will undergo conversion like Barbara and Cusins.

Prompts Undershaft to Express His Political Views

Stephen does not have any role to play in the plot. However, he does his bit to argue with his father over certain important issues.

In one of their conversations when Undershaft speaks against the country and the government, Stephen protests against having the government of his country insulted :

> I am sorry, sir, that you force me to forget the respect due to you as my father. I am an Englishman and I will not hear the Government of my country insulted.

This makes Undershaft retort :

> The government of your country ! I am the government of your country : I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus ?...Be off with you, my boy, and play with your caucuses and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning question and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting-house to pay the piper and call the tune.

His Faith in 'Character'

Stephen retorts that all that his father has been saying to him sounds absurd. He tells Undershaft : "It is natural for you to think that money governs England ; but you must allow me to think I know better."

Undershaft : And what does govern England, pray ?

Stephen : Character, father, character.

Undershaft : Whose character ? Yours or mine ?

Stephen : Neither yours nor mine, father, but the best elements in the English national character.

Undershaft : Stephen : Ive found your profession for you. Your a born journalist. I'll start you with a high-toned weekly review. There !

This proves Stephen to be sincere in his views, who has a morality to the extent that he has an unflinching faith in the national character. We marvel at the faith of this young man !

His Conversion

We have one portrait of Stephen in Act One, when he says : "Right is right ; and wrong is wrong." He is prejudiced against his father. He tells his mother :

> We cannot take money from him. I had rather go and live in some cheap place like Bedford Square or even Hampstead than take a farthing of his money.

But in Act Three we have another portrait of Stephen. Stephen of Act One is different from Stephen of Act Three. When he visits the works of his father, he is very much impressed :

> Oh, magnificent. A perfect triumph of modern industry. Frankly, my dear father, I have been a fool : I had no idea of what it all meant : of the wonderful forethought, the power of organization, the administrative capacity, the financial genius, the colossal capital it represents. I have been repeating to myself as I came through your streets "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war."

And he finally tells Cusins :

> Well, I just want to say this before I leave you to yourselves. Dont let anything I have said about right and wrong prejudice you against this great chance of life. I have satisfied myself that the business is one of the highest character and a credit to our country. (*Emotionally*) I am very proud of my father...

Conclusion

In fact Stephen does not play any significant role. But his importance lies in the fact that he is a young man with certain views, though we may not agree with his views. His conversion at the end of the play is as significant and important as the conversion of Major Barbara. He who was the bitter critic of his father becomes an ardent admirer of Undershaft at the end of the play. There lies his significance.

(5) LADY BRITOMART

Her Personality

Shaw introduces Lady Britomart in the following words :

> Lady Britomart is a woman of fifty or thereabouts, well dressed and yet careless of her dress, well bred and quite reckless of her breeding, well mannered and yet appallingly outspoken and indifferent to the opinion of her interlocutors, amiable and yet peremptory, arbitrary, and high-tempered to the last bearable degree, and withal a very typical managing matron of the upper class, treated as a naughty child until she grew into a scolding mother, and finally settling down with plenty of practical ability and worldly experience, limited in the oddest way with

> domestic and class limitations, conceiving 'the universe exactly as if it were a large house in Wilton Crescent, though handling her corner of it very effectively on that assumption, and being quite enlightened and liberal as to the books in the library, the pictures on the wall, the music in the portfolios, and the articles in the papers.

Lady Britomart is said to have been suggested by the late Countess of Carlisle, Gilbert Murray's mother-in law. She is the daughter of an Earl ; she is commanding, imperious and authoritative. She expects perfect obedience from her children. She rebukes Stephen for the slightest fault.

A Comic Figure

The most important function that she performs in the play is that of providing comic relief. She snubbs Stephen when he takes up a paper to read or when he fidgets with his tie. She rebukes Charles Lomax again and again when he uses slang, or colloquial words and phrases. However, she herself becomes a comic figure when at the end of Act One all her children leave her, despite her command to the contrary, and go to the drawing-room to play on the concertina and the tambourine. Her discomfiture is comic rather than tragic.

Her Separation From Her Husband

One of the main points that emerge from the opening section of the play is that Lady Britomart is living separately from her husband. Lady Britomart explains Undershaft is a foundling and reveals that one of the reasons she separated from him was his insistence on adhering to the tradition that the Undershaft business should descend to another foundling, which could cut out Stephen from the inheritance. Another reason of the estrangement was that Undershaft did not exactly do wrong things, he said them and thought them : "that was what was so dreadful. He really had a sort of religion of wrongness...I couldnt forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality."

Her Concern For Her Family

When the play begins, the engagement of Lady Britomart's two daughters to young men without money has compelled her to ask her husband to call upon her in order that she may persuade him to make a fitting provision for them. The one daughter is a very ordinary society girl ; the other, Barbara has a genius for saving souls, and is already a prominent officer in the Salvation Army. She is engaged to Cusins, a professor of Greek, who fell in love with her and proposed under the impression that she was an ordinary Salvation Army lass.

Lady Britomart sees it as Undershaft's duty to provide for his family now that they are of marriageable age. She extracts a promise from her husband that he would adequately provide for his daughters as desired by Lady Britomart. She also insists that the inheritance of the Undershaft works should pass on to Stephen, her only son. But Undershaft refuses to agree to this proposal, because according to the Undershaft tradition the Undershaft property can be inherited by a foundling, and Stephen is not a foundling. Lady Britomart shows her anger and resentment over this Undershaft tradition, which indicates her concern for her son.

Based On Murray's Mother-in-Law

It is a well-known fact that Shaw based Adolphus Cusins, his professor of Greek, on Gilbert Murray, but it is less well-known that he based Lady Britomart on Murray's real-life mother-in-law, Lady Rosalind Frances, Countess of Carlisle. (Indeed, Shaw jokingly told Murray in a letter that he was at work on a play to be called "Murray's Mother-in-Law"). The Countess of Carlisle was, like Lady Britomart, a Whig peeress ; her father was the Liberal whip in parliament, and she was herself a crusading temperance reformer and the leader for eighteen years of the national Woman's Liberal Federation.

The clue to Shaw's treatment of the comic contradictions in Lady Britomart's character may be found in a remark by James Froude, Carlyle's biographer, on the subject of Lady Rosalind. Froude, who disapproved of her politics but admired her character, said that though she professed to be a Liberal, she was by temperament better fitted to be an "empress". By family tradition and personal conviction Lady Britomart is an avowed believer in free speech and a democratic franchise, but every speech that she utters shows her native aristocratic spirit and natural masterfulness at odds with these ideals.

Her Moralism

Where Lady Britomart's moralism is not an aristocratic one, it is merely a rationalization of her class prejudices and privileges, "right" and "propriety" being whatever furthers the Stephenage family interests and "wrong" and "impropriety" being whatever conflicts with them. For the central issue of the first act, and indeed of the play as a whole, is who will inherit the armament factory owned by Lady Britomart's husband, Andrew Undershaft.

The question of the Undershaft inheritance has caused a rift between the husband and wife : according to the tradition of the firm, the inheritance must go not to a son of the owner but to some promising adopted heir. This condition, utterly

at odds with aristocratic belief in birth and blood, so offends Lady Britomart that it is useless for Andrew to argue that the Roman Empire was run successfully on this scheme and that it brought to the throne Marcus Aurelius. She is so used to thinking of the Stephenages as governors by natural right that when Andrew had refused to break the firm's law of succession in favour of his son Stephen the resulting quarrel led to a legal separation. Lady Britomart's way of putting this is to declare that nothing can bridge fundamental "moral" disagreement.

Conclusion

Lady Britomart, however, plays no great part in *Major Barbara* after the first act. She is an interesting character, but the play is not about her; and in developing her so fully in the expository part of the play and making so little use of her thereafter, Shaw demonstrates how far he had departed by this time from the economy of the well-made play.

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Minor Characters in Major Barbara

(1) CHARLES LOMAX

His Personality

Charles Lomax loves Sarah, Lady Britomart's daughter, and is engaged to her. He is a young man about town. Shaw introduces him in the following words :

> He is afflicted with a frivolous sense of humor which plunges him at the most inopportune moments into paroxysms of imperfectly suppressed laughter.

Lomax thinks that it will be 'rather a lark' to marry Sarah.

A Poor Millionaire

Charles Lomax loves Sarah, Lady Britomart's second daughter. Lady Britomart is proud of this fact. She tells Stephen : "I have made a very good match for Sarah." But Lady Britomart's concern for Charles Lomax and Sarah is far more serious ; she wants to see them well settled and well provided for. Though Lomax is a rich man, but presently his income is not more than pounds 800 a year, which, according to Lady Britomart, is not sufficient for them. Lady Britomart informs Stephen :

> Charles Lomax will be a millionaire at 35. But that is ten years ahead ; and in the meantime his trustees cannot under the terms of his father's will allow him more than pounds 800 a year.

When Stephen points out that according to the will if Lomax increases his income by his own exertions, they may double the increase, Lady Britomart retorts :

> Charles Lomax's exertions are much more likely to decrease his income than to increase it. Sarah will have to find at least another pounds 800 a year for the next ten years ; and even then they will be as poor as church mice.

Thus, we find Charles Lomax in a precarious position, and it is but natural that his would-be mother-in-law should come to his rescue so that her daughter may not suffer the want of money.

A Comic Character

Both Charles Lomax and Sarah are ordinary people who will marry and lead the usual commonplace hum-drum life. They serve to throw into sharp relief the "uncommonness" of Barbara and Adolphus Cusins. However. the most important function of Charles Lomax is that of providing dramatic relief. He constantly uses slang and colloquial terms as 'ripping', 'Tosh', 'it is rather too thick', etc. He is constantly snubbed by Lady Britomart, and ordered to speak in a dignified manner, which he is unable to do. Lady Britomart reprimands Lomax :

> You didnt think Charles. You never do so ; the result is, you never mean anything.

And again :

> Remember, Charles, that Sarah will want to feel proud of you instead of ashamed of you.

And once again :

> Charles Lomax : if you can behave yourself, behave yourself. If not, leave the room.

Whenever the discussion tends to grow too serious, or has continued for too long a time, he serves to provide refreshing and much needed diversion.

(2) JENNY HILL

Her Personality

Jenny Hill is a pale, overwrought, pretty Salvation girl of eighteen. She is one of the London poor. She has been saved and now works as a devoted soldier of the Salvation Army. She works with courage and determination and her religious enthusiasm makes her beautiful and fascinating.

An Orthodox Christian

Orthodox Christianity has a truer representative in Jenny Hill than in Barbara Undershaft, and Jenny's Christian spirit is a sublimation of her womanly nature. She tells Rummy :

> Oh isnt it wonderful how a few minutes prayer revives you ! I was quite lightheaded at twelve o'clock, I was so

> **tired ; but Major Barbara just sent me to pray for five minutes ; and I was able to go on as if I had only just begun.**

She is assaulted by Bill Walker, but she does not grow vindictive. She forgives him and prays for him. This is the right way to react to people like Bill Walker. The result is that Bill's heart is touched and first he wants to cancel the wrong he has done by being beaten himself, and then tries to compensate her by giving her money. She is prompted in her feelings of forgive and forget as a true Christian.

Her Positive Qualities

Jenny is the natural victim of the bullying male ; turning the other cheek in response to Bill Walker's assault, offering forgiveness instead of revenge and treating her suffering as a matter for joy. She merits her place in the triumphal band, bearing her tambourine, for she has positive qualities that Shaw admires. She is a symbol of genuine courage and cheerfulness and industry in the cause she has at heart ; this is a credible instance of the "worm.. in the back kitchen" become a woman, a daughter of the Highest (God).

Her Weaknesses

Jenny's morale (she is only eighteen) is fed by her admiration of Barbara, and there are weaknesses in her that lessen her appeal. Her conventional expressions of piety often strike a false note ; her insistence on *love* is too facile ; her piety is equally sentimental. Neatly, Shaw demonstrates something unpleasant in her excessive sympathy ; Barbara's sense of the ridiculous, like Undershaft's antagonisms, conveys a truer respect for human dignity, for the independence and privacy of the soul :

Bill : (*with sour mirthless humour*) Aw was sivin anather menn's knees at the tawn. E was kneelin on moy ed, e was...E was pryin for me : pryin comfortable wiv me as a cawpet. Sow was Mog. Sao was the aol bloomin meetin. Mog she says 'Aw Lawd brike is stabborn sperrit ; bat down urt is dear art.' Thet was wot she said. 'Downt urt is dear art !' An er blowk thirteen stun four !— kneelin wiv all is weight on me. Fanny, ai'nt it ?

Jenny : Oh no. We're so sorry, Mr. Walker.

Barbara : (*enjoying it frankly*) Nonsense ! of course it is funny...

Jenny : I'm so sorry, Mr. Walker.

Bill : (*fiercely*) Downt you gow being sorry for me; youve no call......Aw downt want to be forgive be you, or be ennybody......

If Shaw was concerned to attack the morbid sentimentality of late Victorian Christianity, he was—he needed to be—ready likewise to attack the womanly ideal associated with it. This imbalance between Jenny's emotional and intellectual development has made her the dupe of society, unawake to realities, assisting the millionaire's daughter in collecting the pennies of the indigent in her tambourine, as the wealthy good-for-nothing Lomax takes them in his hat.

Conclusion

There is an analogy to be drawn between Jenny and Barbara who, with the same power of work and need to expend herself in a cause, has to be cured of a similar blindness to things as they are, saved from an equal frittering away of her quality in a cause unliberated from the capitalist economy. Certainly Shaw does not repudiate wholesale the Christianity that Barbara and Jenny share; it is vulnerability and self-betrayal that he rejects.

(3) BILL WALKER

His Personality

Bill Walker is a tough ruffian of about twenty-five. He is a criminal, given to drinking. He does not hesitate to indulge in physical violence. He is first introduced to us when he comes to the Salvation Army shelter to take away his girl, Mog Habbijam, who has been there for help. As soon as he enters the shelter, he encounters Jenny Hill and threatens her. Shaw describes Bill's first appearance on the stage in the following words :

> She (Jenny) is hurrying to the shelter, when the new-comer moves quickly up to the door and intercepts her. His manner is so threatening that she retreats as he comes at her truculently driving her down the yard.

He thinks that Jenny Hill has taken away his girl and has converted her. So, he wants to teach her a lesson. He takes Jenny by the arm and slings her towards the door of the shelter. She falls on her hand and knee. He also assaults Rummy who comes to the help of Jenny.

His Conversion

This blow very nearly brings about his own conversion ; for Jenny Hill does not resent it, and Major Barbara takes advantage of the shame which begins to stir in him to make him more and more uncomfortable. By insisting quietly on his brutality Barbara reduces Bill to a state of guilt, and to his alarm speaks of saving his soul. She will not leave him alone, so that he goes off to Canning Town in order to repay Jenny for having hit her. His sense of rough justice tells him that if Todger Fairmile hits him it will make matters square. Adolphus Cusins agrees with him, Barbara tells him "Two black eyes wont make one white one, Bill." However, although soon afterwards Bill is physically humiliated by Todger, who is now a sergeant in the Salvation Army, it is the way that Barbara works on the conscience that makes the greatest impression on him and on us :

Bill : *(starting up from the trough in consternation)* It's a loy. Aw never said so. (She shakes her head). Oo taold you wot was in moy mawnd ?

Barbara : Only your new friend.

Bill : Wot new friend ?

Barbara : The devil, Bill. When he gets round people they get miserable, just like you.

Bill : *(with a heartbreaking attempt at devil-may-care cheerfulness)* Aw aint miserable. (He sits down again, and stretches his legs in an attempt to seem indifferent).

Barbara : Well, if youre happy, why dont you look happy, as we do ?

Bill : *(his legs curling back in spite of him)* Aw'm eppy enaff. Aw tell you. Woy cawn't you lea me alown ? Wot ev I dan to you ? Aw aint smashed your fice, ev Aw ?

Barbara : *(softly : wooing his soul)* It's not me thats getting at you, Bill.

Bill : Oo else is it ?

Barbara : Somebody that doesn't intend you to smash women's faces, I suppose. Somebody or something that wants to make a man of you.

Bill : (*blustering*) Mike a menn o me. Aint Aw a menn ? eh ? Oo sez Aw'm not a menn ?

Barbara : Theres a man in you somewhere, I suppose. But why did he let you hit poor little Jenny Hill ? That wasn't very manly of him, was it ?

Bill : (*tormented*) Ev dan wiv it, Aw tell you. Chack it. Aw'm sick of your Jenny Hill and er silly little fice.

Barbara : Then why do you keep thinking about it ? Why does it keep coming up against you in your mind ? Youre not getting converted, are you ?

Bill : (*with conviction*) Not Me. Not Lawkly.

Barbara : Thats right, Bill. Hold out against it. Put out your strength. Don't lets get you cheap. Todger Fairmile said he wrestled for three nights against his salvation harder than he ever wrestled with the Jap at the music hall. He gave into the Jap when his arm was going to break. But he didn't give into his salvation until his heart was going to break. Perhaps you'll escape that. You havn't heart, have you ?

Bill : Wot d'ye mean ? Woy aint Aw got a awt the sime as enybody else ?

Barbara : A man with a heart wouldn't have bashed poor little Jenny's face, would he ?

Bill : (*almost crying*) Ow, will lea me alown ? Ev Aw ever offered to meddle with you, that you cam neggin and provowkin me lawk this ? (*He writhes convulsively from his eyes to his toes*).

This is how Bill Walker enables the dramatist to bring to light this particular aspect of Barbara's character. The portraiture of Barbara thus gains depth and beauty.

Afraid of Barbara

Bill Walker, the ruffian and striker of women, is really afraid of Barbara. He has been somewhat put down by Shirley's information that 'the major here is the Earl o Stevenage's granddaughter', and when Barbara enters, 'Bill, cowed, sits down in the corner on a form, and turns his back on them.' Even later on when Barbara is very

rough to him, he does not show any intention to commit violence, rather has completely surrendered before her. Throughout the scene it is amusing to note how horrified Bill is by Barbara's preaching at him. We see this when Barbara introduces him to Adolphus :

Barbara : Oh ! there you are, Dolly. Let me introduce a new friend of mine, Mr. Bill Walker. This is my bloke, Bill : Mr. Cusins ......

Bill : Gowin to merry im ?

Barbara : Yes.

Bill : (*fervently*) Gawd elp in ! Gaw-aw-aw-awd elp in !

Barbara : Why ? Do you think he wont be happy with me ?

Bill : Awve aony ed to stend it for a mawnin : e'll ev to stend it for a lawltawm.

Conclusion

Bill Walker makes a very significant statement at the end of Act Two : "Wot prawce Selvytion nah ?" When Bill Walker, to atone for having smashed Jenny's face, offers her a sovereign, which Barbara forbids her to accept, and Bill sneers that being an earl's granddaughter, Barbara would look at nothing less than a hundred pounds. However, Undershaft sees his chance and offers the other ninety-nine pounds, which Barbara also repulses. But later on Mrs Baines accepts the generous offer of pounds 5,000 of Undershaft. In a way Undershaft has purchased the soul of Barbara for pounds 5,000, and this cancels out Bill's payment which is the token of his release from his bond. Bill's remarks indicate that Salvation has become a commodity, and capitalism has conquered.

(4) SNOBBY PRICE

His Personality

Snobby Price is a young workman out of employment. He is a talker, a poser, sharp enough to be capable of anything in reason except honesty or altruistic considerations of any kind. He is a painter by profession. He is a poor man who has no means of livelihood except the charity provided by religious organisations like the Salvation Army. Poverty has made him dishonest and hypocritical. He makes false 'confession' that he used to beat his mother, and pretends to have been 'converted', while in reality he has come to the shelter for the sake of bread.

Snobby Price does not hesitate to steal the sovereign thrown by Bill Walker, thus showing that his 'confession' is false and that he is dishonest. Snobby Price explains his own character in the following words :

> Fust : I'm intelligent......intelligent beyond the station o life into which it has pleased the capitalists to call me ; and they dont like a man that sees through em. Second, an intelligent bein needs a doo share of appiness ; so I drink somethink cruel when I get the chawnce. Third, I stand by my class and do as little as I can so's to leave arf the job for me fellow workers. Fourth, I'm fly enough to know wots inside the law and wots outside it ; and inside it I do as the capitalists do : pinch wot I can lay me ands on In a proper state of society I am sober, industrious and honest : in Rome, so to speak, I do as the Romans do. Wots the consequence ? When trade is—and it's rotten bad just now—and the employers as to sack arf their men, they generally start on me.

Through the character of Snobby Price and other like him Shaw has shown that there can be no religion and no morality till poverty is eradicated and the poor are well-fed and well clothed.

A Thief

Snobby Price and Rummy epitomize a natural way of regarding wealth, opposed to Peter Shirley's and Bill Walker's legalistic way. Peter Shirley talks conscientiously in terms of paying for what he gets and being himself paid a just price for what he gives. Bill, attempting legalistically to buy the natural freedom of his soul, throws his sovereign on the drum, where it is followed by Snobby Price's cap. Snobby, the instinctive, unregenerate socialist, is a parasite on legality, as well as the self-justified petty thief preying on such master-thieves as Undershaft and Bodger.

His Significance

The significance of the character of Snobby Price lies in the fact that he proves the truthfulness of Undershaft's remarks that poverty is the worst of crimes. On the one hand Snobby Price pretends that he has been converted, and on the other he steals the sovereign thrown by Bill Walker before skulling off to avoid the mother whom he has maligned in his 'confession'.

When Barbara returns to the yard from her evangelical meeting in Cripps Lane, Shaw prepares us in some measure for the disillusionment that is to be hers at the end of the act by showing how easily she is taken in by Snobby Price whose false confession

'has moved the crowd so much that they have contributed four and tenpence to the collection. But Act Two ends with Barbara's very near defeat. She is forced to face the fact that Snobby Price is a fraud. For Snobby Price money seems of greater value than soul. It is not surprising that when we next see Barbara, she had discarded her Salvation Army uniform.

Conclusion

It is through Snobby Price, Peter Shirley, Jenny Hill, Rummy, and Bill Walker that Shaw has presented the misery and wretchedness of London poor and also given us an idea of the day-to-day working of the Salvation Army. Snobby Price and Rummy are the poor and down-trodden whose poverty has crushed and degraded them Though Snobby Price is a painter by profession, and can make both ends meet, if he gets a regular employment. But since he is unemployed and without any source of living, he has to resort to unfair means for the sake of bread. Thus Snobby Price brings out the predicament and the sorry state of affairs of the poor of London.

Through the character of Snobby Price Shaw proves that the talk of saving the souls of poor men is a sham so long as their bodies are unfed. Shaw champions the cause of the poor, and declares that they should be provided with food, shelter and clothing before preaching them sermons.

(5) PETER SHIRLEY

An Old Man Without Employment

Peter Shirley is a starving, worn-out elderly man. He has been thrown out of his employment simply because he has grown old, and his employers want young workers. When he appears on the stage, he is being led by Jenny Hill ; he is apparently weak with hunger. He tells Rummy and Price :

> I'm not an old man. I'm only 46. I'm as good as ever I was The grey patch come in my hair before I was thirty. All it wants is three pennorth o hair dye : em I to be turned on the streets to starve for it ? Holy God ! Ive worked ten to twelve hours a day since I was thirteen, and paid my way all through ; and now am I to be thrown into the gutter and my job given to a young man that can do it no better than me because Ive black hair that goes white at the first change ?

Through Peter Shirley Shaw airs his views on Socialism to stress the need for social security and old age pension.

Self-Respecting

Peter Shirley is a self-respecting man. When in the Salvation Army shelter he is given bread to eat, he looks at it ravenously, but does not touch it, and cries like a child. He cannot accept anything in charity ; he is not a beggar. He says : "I never took anything before." Jenny Hill consoles him and tells him that it is the Lord that sends him bread : "Besides, when we find you a job you can pay us for it if you like." Shirley accepts food from the Salvation Army shelter only as a loan, which he would like to pay back.

Again, when Bill Walker contemptuously asks him as to what good he is, Shirley retorts :

> As good as you and better. I'll do a day's work agen you or any fat young soaker of your age. Go and take my job at Horrockses, where I worked for ten years. They want young men there : they cant afford to keep men over forty-five. Theyre very sorry—give you a character and happy to help you to get anything suited to your ears—sure a steady man wont be long out of a job. Well, let them try you. They will find the differ. What do you? Not as much as how to beeyave yourself—layin your dirty fist across the mouth of a respectable woman !

The above words of Peter Shirley are a bitter satire on the existing social system.

Challenges Bill Walker

Peter Shirley, though old, has the courage to stand up against a ruffian of the type of Bill Walker, and takes up cudgels against him for assaulting Jenny Hill and Rummy. When Bill Walker hits Jenny, Shirley springs up and faces him fiercely, with the mug in his hand :

> You take a liberty with me, and I 'll smash you over the face with the mug and cut your eye out. Aint you satisfied—young whelps like you—with takin the bread out o the mouths of your elders that have brought you up and slaved for you, but you must shovin and cheekin and bullyin in here, where the bread of charity is sickenin in our stummicks ?

Peter Shirley challenges Bill Walker to hit his son-in-law's brother, Todger Fairmile : "Him that won pounds 20 off the Japanese wrestler at the music hall by standin out 17 minutes 4 seconds agen him." He shouts at Bill and tells him that he would have beaten him himself if he had a week's feeding in him instead of two month's starvation.

When Bill tells him that he has come to beg in the shelter, Shirley feels hurt and bursts into tears: "Oh God! it's true: I'm only an old pauper on the scrap heap." He later on threatens Bill Walker in the name of Barbara, who, he tells him, is the grand-daughter of an earl, and who can put him to trouble. This really cows down Bill.

Contrasted With Undershaft

Shirley is a secularist. Barbara tells him: "My own father's a Secularist, I think. Our Father—yours and mine—fulfils himself in many ways; and I daresay he knew what he was about when he made a Secularist of you."

Again, Peter Shirley provides an interesting contrast to Undershaft. He is what Undershaft would have been without the will and determination which enabled him to shake off his poverty and become a millionaire. Later in the play when Undershaft tells Barbara that his religion is being a millionaire, the theme is restated. The antithetical exchange between Shirley and Undershaft leaves us in no doubt as to the point Shaw was trying to put over. Barbara has just said "Youre not a Millionaire, are you, Peter?"

Shirley : No : and proud of it.

Undershaft : (*gravely*) Poverty, my friend, is not a thing to be proud of.

Shirley : (*angrily*) Who made your millions for you? Me and my like Whats kep us poor? Keepin you rich. I wouldnt have your conscience, not for all your income.

Undershaft : I wouldnt have your income not for all your conscience, Mr. Shirley.

Conclusion

Act Two highlights further the character and personality of Barbara, particularly in her dealing with Peter Shirley and Bill Walker. Her sympathy and human warmth are shown in her dealings with Shirley.

28

Select Literary Criticism

(1)

Shaw's Attitude to Sex

His men talk a good deal but never actually do very much—nothing purposeful and positive. There are exceptions, of course, like Caesar and Undershaft and Magnus, all of whom serve the national, the global, the cosmic, interest. They are almost the heroic exceptions in the masculine world devoted to his interest of self, here and now. On the other hand, Shaw's women, generally considered, naturally embody perpetuity. The biological fact is a beginning, by no means a necessary beginning, and by no means the end of the matter. History, if not Creative Evolution itself, quickens in their wombs ; they aspire to and often realize communion with the Life Force. They are very often daughters of divine Grace—that is to say, Shaw's concept of divine Grace. It seems that Shaw saw the woman as holding out most hope for mankind. He was, as we know, a great champion of woman's rights, though not excessively in sympathy with the suffragette movement. The emancipation he sought for the woman was subtler than that of mere suffrage, and in fact not one of his heroines is a political creature.

—*Leon Hugo*

(2)

Equality of Labour

It should be obvious by now that Shaw is authoritarian in his social and political thinking ; and yet, as I say, he never revoked the ideal of full self-determination. He made this conditional on the demands of Nature and Society . . . . . . he acknowledged that all people desired freedom, or liberty. This, he said, could have only one interpretation :

> . . . . . . from freedom any obligation to do anything except just what we like, without a thought of tomorrow's dinner or any other of the necessities that make slaves of us.

The ideal picture of Shaw's Socialist State, then, is something along these lines : A compulsory working week for all, which leaves

an unprecedented amount of time for painting pictures, writing plays, or indulging in any hobby the person likes. A pleasing picture, a wholesome one, and rationally founded. But it is true—true to the irrational desires of man ?

—*Leon Hugo*

(3)

Shavian Morality

It was Shavian morality which, fifty years ago, completed the picture of critical incomprehension. What, to Shaw, was morality ? Anything that is in accord with established manners and customs. Immorality was the obverse : 'whatever is contrary to established manners and customs...' By this definition private ownership, inequality of incomes, Capitalism, were moral ; state ownership, equality of incomes, Socialism, were immoral. Christianity was moral ; Shavian Christianity was immoral. Natural selection was moral ; Creative Evolution was immoral. The womanly woman, the heroic soldier, romantic love, were moral ; the unwomanly woman, the unheroic soldier, unromantic love, were immoral.

Today we may be much less disposed to see Shaw upside down—his 'immoralities' have largely become our 'moralities'—and yet one may be forgiven for wondering if *every* Shavian immorality has yet been accepted even in theory.

—*Leon Hugo*

(4)

Shavian Morality

Private wealth and public property are still very moral, so moral that they are the cornerstones of existence in the 'free world.' Liberal democracy (manipulated by private wealth) muddles through from one crisis to the next, sustaining itself by catch-phrases, demagogy, opinion polls—by that whopping morality, 'the will of the people.' At least, had Shaw been alive today he would certainly have observed the economic and governmental scenes in this light. And not only these scenes : had he been alive today, he would have observed how half-baked literacy, Hollywood, and sheer human incompetence had baffled his campaigns—and he would have felt compelled to write at least a dozen more 'immoral' plays.

—*Leon Hugo*

(5)

War is Beastly

In an article written in defence of his 'chocolate cream soldier,' Shaw argued for the Bluntschlian 'fact' of soldiering with his usual

vigour, citing literature of military campaigns in support of his contentions. That the soldier and the war he has to wage are diametrically opposed to Sergius and the war he tries to wage is made clear in the play as a whole; this is one of the chief antiromantic themes, handled with such dexterity and effect that it is possible to see Bluntschli's graphic picture '.....they shant get me into the street to amuse themselves with as anticipating the grim cliche of this century'. Bluntschli's possible fate is beastly. The fate of his friend—who is burnt alive in a woodyard set on fire by exploding shells—is similarly beastly. Be *Arms and the Man* as light-hearted and gay as operetta, it yet pauses to tell us that war is beastly.

But war is also paradoxical, if to be most efficiently conducted by professionals, to be won, it well seems, by amateurs. By death or glory volunteers. By Sergius. It is Sergius whose magnificent cavalry charge routs the Serbians. He was an ass, he was lucky, yet he won an important battle: it seems highly unlikely that Shaw who so clearly perceived this Byronic hero's unmitigated asininity and arrant luck should not also have seen his role in winning the war the wrong way.

—*Leon Hugo*

(6)

The Creative Evolution

Given then a physically and mentally superior couple who like a Tanner and an Ann desire betterment, the Life Force may well be imagined for fuller realization. But the problem is not so easily solved. Desire is the important world and the man and the woman each desires a different thing. 'I sing...the philosophic man,' Don Juan says. He might better have sung the artist-philosophic man but he makes his point: he sings that rare man, the creative genius, whose mission it is to elude the toils of love and to realize the Life Force in him unencumbered (possibly destroyed) by that female spider, the wife of his bosom. 'A father! A father for the Superman!' Ann cries—and immediately the conflict is apparent. For hers is the call of the Life to come, of motherhood, of the Ann Whitefields who respond to an urge as tremendous as that driving, the male genius. Two purposes of the Life Force meet head on; the clash, Shaw says, is sometimes tragic. Whether the plays show him to be right is something to consider later; certainly the duel, if not necessarily the war, of the sexes highlights most of them and in many may be seen as the *raison d'être*.

The abstract of the clash is between the future and the present. Ann overcomes Tanner, the continuance of the race is assured, the longer purpose is served. The Superman may be on his way. But by surrendering himself, by discovering that there may be such a thing as a father's heart, after all, Tanner surrenders something of his individual genius and denies the shorter purpose of the Life Force.

—*Leon Hugo*

(7)

Shaw's Views on the Life Force

It is doubtless in order to suggest this higher level of interpretation that the Dialogue in Hell precedes the scene in the garden—one might say of Eden—in which the sacrifice of Tanner is celebrated. The upshot, as in *Candida* is an interpretation of the age-old story of the wife, the lover, and the husband in a manner that seems orginal with Shaw. In his view, the comic Will asserts its biologic choices through the female, so that every woman knows instinctively the man best fitted by nature to serve her procreative function. The artist, the thinker, the poet—self-engrossed, meditative types primarily interested in creative activity along intellectual or aesthetic lines—are parthogenetic organisms not properly fitted for the task of bisexual procreation. The woman may find such men to her liking, but in her instinctive wisdom, she rejects them no matter how attractive they may seem. Nor is the ordinary man much to her liking, though she may have to settle for him, for she can do no more than to perpetuate his mediocrity. The truly desirable man is one who is developed beyond the generality, but not to the point where he is beyond the possibility of domestication. Such is John Tanner. In him, as Mrs. Whitefield remarks, Ann meets her match.

—*Maurice Valency*

(8)

Shaw's Realism

For Shaw realism was not a technique that involved the laboratory methods of the school of Medan. The realistic imagination was "the power to imagine things as they are without actually sensing them." Shaw was consciously engaged on the side of that down-to-earth view of life which realistic writers long before the time of Boccaccio had advanced against the idealistic attitudes of feudal Christianity. All succeeding ages in some measure inherited this issue. The result is a polarity of truly impressive proportions, the workings of which are demonstrable at every stage of Western culture, and particularly clear in the later half of the nineteenth century, when realism became a political influence.

Neither Trench in *Widower's Houses,* nor Vivie in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, can be considered, from this point of view, realistic characters. It would be realistic for Trench to maintain his aristocratic aloofness and, while persisting in his contempt for Sartorius, to go on living comfortably on the income he provided. Normally, Vivie would despise her mother without giving up her monthly tribute. Both Trench and Vivie are romantic characters, idealists, each in his way.

—*Maurice Valency*

(9)

Shaw's Religion

Contemporary mysticism addressed itself to the reality beyond reason but it was closely related to aestheticism. Nothing was further from Shaw's mind. In his judgement, the justification of art was its capacity to facilitate the transmission of useful thoughts. In this idea, it seemed to Shaw, he was at one with Tolstoy. As their correspondence indicates, Tolstoy was not at all of his mind; nevertheless Shaw does seem to have come closer to him in theory than to any of his other contemporaries. In his later life Tolstoy was convinced that great art was necessarily religious, and great in proportion to its ability to transmit religious ideas. Since it was just so that Shaw defined his art also, he could not see where, precisely, he and Tolstoy differed and evidently considered that he understood Tolstoy better than Tolstoy understood himself.

—*Maurice Valency*

(10)

Shaw's Realism as Reflected in His Characters

In his early plays, Shaw's viewpoint is vaguely Hobbesian. His characters demonstrate a high degree of self-interest, and the egotism of each figures as Trench, Charteris, and Vivie Warren is set down to the author's realism in the portrayal of human types. By the time of *The Devil's Disciple*, however, egotism takes on a more complex character. Self-interest develops to the point where it transcends the uses of the self and is put at the service of humanity. The hero now responds to the impulses of a being more abstract than himself. This being rather evades definition. But obviously it represents an overwhelming need to associate oneself with a meaningful principle, a point of reference in the seemingly senseless flux of existence. It is at this point that Shaw's realism begins to shade into poetry, and poetry into mysticism.

The consciousness of serving a purpose, profoundly selfish, but immensely wider than one's immediate advantage, gives Dick Dudgeon a quite novel quality as dramatic character. He is, in other respects, a very ordinary, decent young man. What makes him a hero is his consciousness of an appetite beyond the usual, which Shaw later called the evolutionary appetite. He identified it, in accordance with the latest fashion, with the diabolic, that is to say, the spirit of negation; but it soon became associated in his mind with the Holy Spirit. It became God.

—*Maurice Valency*

(11)

Realistic Expressions of the Life Force

In this manner, having rejected in the name of realism, all the traditional values of romance, Shaw retrieved them one by one

as realistic expressions of the Life Force. By shifting his axis from the self-interest of the individual to the self-interest of the species, he was able to reconcile individualism with socialism, and realism with idealism, and thus to place his characters on a level where their extravagance could be justified in terms of a higher morality. Lady Cicely's will to power would be an intolerable nuisance were it not consecrated to the service of humanity: and Caesar might seem oppressively intrusive did he not embody an ethical principle. Similarly, in *Androcles and the Lion*, Lavinia's determination to be eaten by lions might be interpreted as the sheerest masochism were she not serving the cause of freedom, and in *Pygmalion* Higgins might seem unbearably egotistical were he not justified by his devotion to science. In each case it was by treating the equivocal realities of this life as symbolic of a higher and more intelligible reality that Shaw was able to suggest through the idiosyncracies of exceptional people the workings of a universal principle. The result of his method is a type of drama which aims at revelation rather than at revolution so that it is with pleasure that we discover that in the course of the action we have somehow been converted to a view we have never questioned.

— *Maurice Valency*

(12)

Shaw's Religious Iconography

Shaw's work may thus be regarded as a phase of the agelong process of reconciling science with religion. It may be objected that in *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* there is to be found neither reliable science nor sound theology. Doubtless this is true, but the search for certainty in both these fields is, at best, a dubious quest, and it was no small achievement to have found, on any terms, a believable docrine in a skeptical age. Jacques Maritain remarked in his *Notes on Modern Poetry*, that symbolist poets, groping about their void, sometimes to their surprise find God there. Something of the sort happened to Shaw. He did not follow the path of Claudel, or Eliot, nor did he come upon the same God as they. His symbolism, like his poetic, was singularly his own; he found his God, naturally where most he sought Him, in science, or something like it. It was also characteristic of Shaw that, once he had gained what he thought to be a fundamental insight, he hastened to incorporate it into the programme of public instruction which he had undertaken as his special mission in life. Marx had proposed to educate the working classes into full consciousness of their power. Shaw's aim was wider. He made it his task to educate mankind into an awareness of its divinity. It is in this sense that he spoke of his work as religious iconography.

—*Maurice Valency*

(13)

Life Force : The Powerful Subconscious Urge

As the modern comedy does not allow sufficient room for the discussion of the ideas he wished to convey, Shaw wrote a play within the play under the title of *Don Juan in Hell*, where the three main characters discuss their points of view with the devil, who appears in the comedy only in a small part. Shaw's and Tanner's philosophy is in roughest outline, the idea that progress in the widest sense of evolution is the result of a powerful subconscious urge, the "Life Force." This force drives all living things towards an aim which consists in the change of matter and energy into thought. In animals, including most human beings this force acts through the improvement of the race and species, and for this reason it is most powerful in woman. Man—with the exception of the artist who has his own purpose in life—is only an instrument for improving the race, ultimately by the creation of a better species, which Shaw calls the Superman.

—*E. Strauss*

(14)

The Special Features of the Shavian Preface

What are the special features of the Shavian preface and, indeed, of the Shavian essay in general? First there is a strong personal note which we may find in almost all of them ...... Shaw's essays, however, usually deal with serious questions of great weight, and, perhaps in order to lighten the weight of the subject-matter, Shaw gives wherever possible a strong personal note to his essays... Thus he begins the preface to *Back to Methuselah* with an excellent story of himself first as a small boy in a Dublin bookshop, and then as a young man, together with a very suspicious uncle in a restaurant. He starts a serious essay on prisons with the impression made on him by a visit to Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, and an essay on marriage with the advice he usually gives to young ladies in need of such advice. By these means the reader always feels that he is not simply reading a book on evolution, religion, marriage or education, but that he has the privilege of exchanging opinions with one of the most challenging and entertaining minds of his time, perhaps of all times.

The next common feature of most Shavian essays is their criticism of existing conditions and generally accepted ideas. Shaw is a much more thorough reformer as an essayist than as a dramatist; although many of his plays, particularly his earliest and his latest plays, are mainly devoted to the criticism of existing conditions. So he powerfully attacks things as they are—parliamentary system in politics, Darwinism in science, churches in religion, the laws of marriage and punishment in social relations, schools in education.

—*E. Strauss*

(15)

Shaw's Fabian Ideas

His central theme is the principle of equality of income. Socialism, Shaw explains, is nothing but a system of sharing the national income available for individual use equally among all members of society. In order to show the need for such a system, he examines in detail every other method for sharing the national income, and tries to prove that they are all either impossible or bad. In particular, he criticises at great length the capitalist system, and shows its effects on marriage, the law, education and on international affairs and particularly the danger that it may lead to destructive wars. His discussion of the means for changing capitalism into socialism shows that in all that he has remained true to the Fabian idea of his youth. Towards the end of the book (*The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*) Shaw has some severe things to say about Soviet Russia, which show him critical of its methods and many of its most important beliefs, although full of sympathy with its socialist aims.

—*E. Strauss*

(16)

"G. B. S."

Bernard Shaw did not suddenly leap into fame with one great work ; he slowly made his way against great obstacles. Befors becoming famous, he had first to become notorious. The instrument which he used in order to interest and impress the public was hie own personality, or rather the personality which he assumed for this purpose and which became identified with the initials "G. B. S."

He not only compared himself with Shakespeare, but took it for granted that in intelligence he was infinitely superior to his "rival." On the occasion of his first dramatic effort, *Widower's Houses*, he said about Shakespeare : 'If the fellow had not been a great poet, his rubbish would have been forgotten long ago. Moliere, as a thinker, was worth a thousand Shakespeares. If my play is not better than Shakespeare, let it be damned promptly." . . . .Even in the sphere of poetry he pretended to stand on the same level as Shakespeare, and did not hesitate to claim that he could himself write blank verse more swiftly than prose—"and that, too, full of Elizabethan quality plus the Shakespearean sense of the absurdity of it.''

It would be hardly fair to revive the memory of these absurd exaggeration without pointing out that they were part and parcel of a deliberate policy...Shaw certainly made use of the cart and trumpet in order to establish his position.

—*E. Strauss*

(17)

Shaw : A Great Dramatist

The main quality which made Shaw a great dramatist was neither his powerful intelligence nor even his lively imagination, but the great moral passion which made him the man he is. In all his finest works he is deeply concerned with the same great problem—the state of the world and of society, the means to its improvement, its final destiny. This is, indeed, the main reason why most of his plays are "problem plays" in a sense which makes them different in kind from those of Shakespeare. His characters do not come before the problems; they are means to solve the problems. His finest creations are those of characters expressing his own ruling passion—the girl-heroines like Saint Joan, Lavinia or Barbara Undershaft. This is not to say that he was unable to draw characters who do not fit into this framework. His studies of Caesar and Napoleon, his modern business-men and many of his comic characters disprove this, but it remains true that the characters most closely connected with the problem nearest to his heart are generally his best

- E. Strauss

(18)

Shaw's Place in Literature

For all these reasons Bernard Shaw has been one of the greatest personal influences on the educated public of the whole world. No one would claim, of course, that his influence has always been a good one. Nevertheless, it is true to say that in most cases Shaw has been on the side of the angels even when great courage was needed to give public expression to his convictions. As a dramatist he has taught people to laugh at things which had been thoughtlessly admired and to hate systems which had little in their favour but their power to stifle opposition. As a thinker he has used his great powers to put forward presuasively and interestingly ideas which were far from popular with many of his readers His works express an unusually attractive personality—strong-minded, fair, almost incredibly good-tempered, though sometimes seriously ill-balanced in his judgements.

If greatness consists in being irreplaceable, Bernard Shaw's greatness is assured. Perhaps the most characteristic sign of his greatness is the fact in spite of his fame, there has never been a school of dramatists who tried to imitate him. It was not long before people began to talk about him as the English (or Irish) Moliere or the Voltarie of the twentieth century, and undoubtedly he combines in himself some of the qualities of both these great men. Shaw's name will not be forgotten as long as theirs are remembered, and what is best in his influence may well become part of our common human heritage.

—E. Strauss

(19)

The Use of Paradox in Shaw's Plays

A dozen other plays follow a similar, although sometimes a looser, pattern. In *Arms and the Man*, the conventional attitudes towards military heroism and the 'higher love' are presented in the Irony Stage, debunked in the Definition Stage...In *Man and Superman*, the main theme is a paradoxical view of courtship with woman as the hunter. If the theme is for us less paradoxical, and therefore less amusing, Shaw is in no small part responsible. The paradox has become a widely accepted truth. In the inverted melodrama of *The Devil's Disciple*, the devil turns out to be an angel. In *Candida* the stronger of the two men turns out to be the weaker, and the strong husband turns to be a domestic pet. In *The Apple Cart*, the weaker turn out to be stronger, a constitutional monarch, by exploiting the resources of democracy, triumphing over a democratically constituted cabinet. In *How He Lied to Her Husband*, the husband is angry because another man is not in love with his wife. In *Widower's Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the innocent are as guilty or more guilty than the guilty, the emphasis being on collective responsibility for individual sin.

—*Fred Mayne*

(20)

Wit and Truth

Perhaps nowhere does Shaw give more explicit utterance to his belief that wit, to remain on the side of the real, must remain on the side of the vital, and that there can be no hard and fast division between wit and truth on one side and seriousness and falsity on the other. To be always in the strive of truth wit must retain the resilience of truth intellectuality, otherwise it will degenerate into the laughter of the jackass or the sneering of one who does not believe in anything Wit may be partisan and indulge in the half-truth for the purpose of exposing falsity, but it must remain conscious of its partisanship. In other words, it must have truth as its aim.

Shaw himself was, of course, very conscious that truth is a fundamental ingredient of wit. Chesterton even said that 'he will never admit of any of his jokes that it was only a joke. When he was most witty he will passionately deny his own wit.' And a paradox from Bluntschli, taken in its context, demonstrates the fusion of technique and truth in the formation of wit:

Raina : (*Wonderingly*) Do you know, you are the first man I ever met who did not take me seriously ?

Bluntschli : You mean, don't you, that I am the first man that has ever taken you quite seriously ?

—*Fred Mayne*

(21)

Major Barbara : A Religious Play

In 1905, *Major Barbara* must have been a more surprising and startling play than can easily be appreciated now. Shaw was at that time regarded as a godless person who aimed to throw, if he could, all religion. Yet it should have been apparent to all his opponents that *Major Barbara* is a deeply religious play, even though it shows no reverence for certain doctrines that were considered vital to Christian belief and conduct. That was the play's chief source of offence to the orthodox : its purpose might be good, but the terms and tendency of the argument in which the purpose is stated were found disturbing. Indeed, in those moments when Barbara Undershaft is moved by the most profound religious fervour, she uses phrases which, however intensely charged with conviction, sounded blasphemous to those to whom religion was a comforting emotion rather than a life changing force of divine origin.

Shaw chose to write his play around the Salvation Army because its members were fervent and enthusiastic about their religion : it was a thrilling and joyous uplifting of the spirit, a fire burning in them and breaking out of them not only in sermons and songs of praise but also and more importantly in high-spirited warfare against the Enemy.

—*A. C. Ward*

(22)

Paradox in "Major Barbara"

In *Major Barbara*, therefore, we have an apparently paradoxical situation in which Shaw, a known crusader against war and destruction, becomes (if only by proxy through the characters in the play) the defender of a wholesale destroyer, Undershaft the armaments maker, against the salvationist ideals of his daughter Barbara. Moreover, the arguments of the destroyer of lives appear to triumph over those of the saver of souls.

The explanation and solution of this paradox are not difficult to find. Shaw did not support or excuse armaments making and selling ; but still less would he excuse poverty. Since the armaments magnate in the play paid his workers enough to enable them to live in decency and self-respect and to know the satisfactions of life on earth, they were not the kind of human material that could be bribed into religion by gifts and promises. It had been easy for Barbara to convert men and women in the slums of London ; but at Perivale St. Andrews she faces a greater challenge and a harder task.

She had joined the Salvation Army thinking she could cut hereself off entirely from the world in which profit and wealth are obtained from anti-social sources such as the production of intoxicating drinks and weapons of war. When she learns that the work of the Salvation Army cannot be carried on without donations from those very sources—from, as she says, 'Drunkenness and Murder'—she suffers the tremendous shock she described to her father later: "I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me."

—*A. C. Ward*

(23)

A Great Play

However repetitious it may be to harp upon the point, it is important to stress that Shaw's unquenchable sense of fun was of priceless value in rescuing, preaching and moralizing from the dreary disrepute in which it had been plunged by numberless Victorian sermonizers. No finer sermon than *Major Barbara* has ever been preached; no play ever written is more deserving of respect, none holds the attention more readily and continuously, none is more entertaining. *Major Barbara* is one of several plays by Shaw of which a future critic would be compelled to say, if it were recovered from the ruins of our civilization as the only surviving work of an unidentified author, 'This is a great play by a great and good man.'

x x x x

The ample light relief in *Major Barbara* makes it an enjoyable comedy, but its permanent importance is in the magnificent discussion involving Undershaft, Cusins, and Barbara. Outside these scenes there are otherwise, witty, and bitingly ironical observations: as, for example, when Undershaft's priggish young son, Stephen, having enumerated the professions he is qualified to enter, is asked by his father, '...is there anything you know or care for?' Stephen says: 'I know the difference between right and wrong', and Undershaft, '*hugely tickled,*' replies: "You dont say so! What! no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists: the secret of right and wrong. Why man, youre a genius, a master of masters, a god! At twenty-four, too!"

—*A. C. Ward*

(24)

Poverty : The Greatest of Evils

The Preface contains some of Shaw's most trenchant writing and makes it clear that his main theme in the play was to show 'that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor.' This is a doctrine he has preached previously in *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Widowers' Houses*, but in *Major Barbara* he goes further by actually showing the results of poverty on the stage; we do not just hear about its effects in conversations between comfortably off middle-class people. The play, which has a basically respectful attitude towards the social work being done at that time by the Salvation Army, turns sour in its implicit condemnation of a society that organises itself in such a way as to make such work necessary, and there is no doubt that many of the original audience were offended by what they took to be a condemnation of the Salvation Army. It is true that Shaw gives his devil (Undershaft) the best tunes, but his criticism of the Salvation Army's methods is mild compared with Orwell's criticism of a similar organisation nearly thirty years later in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Undershaft speaks of '. . . . . chopping firewood, eating bread and treacle, and being forced to kneel down from time to time to thank heaven for it ; keel drill, I think you call it.' He continues, 'It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms.'

—*G. E. Brown*

(25)

The Crime of Poverty

In this play the millionaire's daughter is a major in the Salvation Army. She 'saves' her converts by helping them, with food and warmth and lodging, by finding them jobs, making them feel they belong and by the cheerful music characteristic of the "Army". (Shaw highly approved of their slogan—"Why should the devil have all the best tunes ?") Her father, who admires and loves her, wants to give a donation to her shelter, but Barbara refuses because it is tainted money. They strike a bargain—a kind of bet—that each will examine the other's way of reforming the poor and see if either can convert the other. Undershaft visits Barbara's shelter and sees her way of dealing with the pitiful outcasts who come to her. Then she visits his armaments factory. She finds well-paid, self-respecting men, able to support their families properly, living in a model village, running their own co-operative insurance

funds, pensions schemes and building society. They are not humble and grateful, as her converts are to her. On the contrary they disrespectfully refer to their employer as Dandy Andy and consider him a cunning old rascal. Undershaft tells Barbara that if she brings the latest ruffian whose soul she is trying to save to work for him, he will convert him by giving him a good wage, a house and a permanent job. In a few months, says Undershaft, he will be a pillar of society.

Barbara : And will he be better for that ?

Undershaft : You know he will. Dont be a hypocrite, Barbara. He will be better fed, better housed, better clothed, better behaved ; and his children will be pounds heavier and bigger That will be better than an American cloth mattress in a shelter, chopping firewood, eating bread and treacle, and being forced to kneel down from time to time to thank heaven for it ; keel drill, I think you call it. It is cheap work, converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms.

The happy ending—or tragedy—of this play is that Barbara has to confess herself defeated. "I cant talk religion to a man with bodily hunger in his eyes." She agrees to leave her outcasts, who sob with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, and take on the well-paid factory-workers, fullfed, quarrelsome and uppish as they are, because that is where salvation is needed. Her father will never again be able to taunt her that her converts were bribed with bread.

—*Ruth Adam*

(26)

Money and Gun-Powder

John Bull's Other Island is a great play which moves from broad fun to near-tragedy without ever losing its delicate artistic balance. It was followed within a year by another great work, *Major Barbara* (1905), which develops the same conflict and takes it one stage farther. In Shaw's own words, its subject is the conflict between the economic and the religious view of life. Andrew Undershaft may be a devil, but nobody could call him a fool. His slogan is "money and gun-powder", and he lives by making cannons and by selling them to anybody able to pay for them. When a poor man tells him that he would not have Undershaft's conscience, not for all his income, Undershaft replies that he would not have the honest man's income, not for all his conscience. Barbara, his daughter, may be a Christian, but nobody (except her father) can

call her mad. She regards all human beings as children of one Father, and believes in true religion as the basis of all society ; while Andrew Undershaft believes only in power—and especially in the power of big business to rule society.

Barbara takes her father to the East End of London to show him her work with the Salvation Army among the poor. Undershaft is not impressed and goes on to show her that big business can "buy" the Salvation Army : he gives a large subscription to its funds in order not to be outdone by another rich benefactor, the whisky distiller Bodger. Barbara is shocked that Salvation Army should accept money made by the manufacture of arms or strong drink. In this state of mind she goes with him on a visit to his large works and the beautiful town which he has built for his workers out of the profits of armament manufacture. Undershaft has destroyed her belief in the possibility of changing the world by religion, and she sees no better way out than to take part in Undershaft's work : "Undershaft and Bodger : their hands stretch everywhere ; when we feed a starving fellow creature it is with their bread, because there is no other bread ; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow ; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life."

—*E. Strauss*

(27)

Undershaft : A Shavian Hero

In *Major Barbara*, the central trio—Undershaft, Barbara, Cusins—differs as much from Broadbent, Keegan, and Doyle as from Ramsden, Ann, and Tanner. This time the successful man is a modern Caesar, at home with himself, imaginative in the Shavian sense, very much the vital hero. The idealistic heroine, though at the outset far gone in illusions, is jolted back to reality at the famous emotional climax of the play. The young professor of Greek who is to be Undershaft's successor will unite—we are asked to hope—realism and idealism, practicality and wisdom, in an almost superhuman union.

Such at any rate seems to be the intention of the play. It is not quite realized. Barbara's final conversion has much less force than her previous disillusionment. Undershaft remains far more impressive than Cusins. Seemingly Shaw started out to demonstrate that poverty is a crime and therefore that there is a more good sense in the career of an Undershaft than in that of a Snobby Price. His play was to have been called *Andrew Undershaft's Profession*, presumably in ironic parallelism with *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, which showed exactly the opposite side of the truth. Probably the

idea of making Cusins the synthesis of Barbara's idealism and her father's realism came to Shaw later, perhaps too late. His devil's advocacy remains all too effective. Like so many other writers, he makes his monster so impressive that no good man can match him. He so brilliantly proves that 'money is the most important thing in the world' that he cannot quite enforce the fundamental Shavian principle that selling yourself is the ultimate horror, that 'money was not born in the light.'

—*Eric Bentley*

(28)

The Theme of Shavian Economics

Those who hold that men's minds and hearts are closely linked to their pockets and bank balances will consider *Major Barbara*, ethically speaking, Shaw's most provocative and urgent play. Economics, he points out, play as big a part in his plays as does the knowledge of anatomy in the works of Michelangelo, and *Major Barbara* is the summit among his plays of his economic knowledge. Founded squarely on the so-called dismal science, it revolves round money and lack of money.

Is it a dull play, then ? No : because in another sense it is a wrestling match between Shaw the economist and Shaw the dramatist, and fortunately for the theatre-goer the dramatist wins hands down. But unfortunately the dramatist wins this welcome victory only at the double cost of being misunderstood and of omitting the play's meaning. Only in the preface is this omission repaired. The play leaves only the imprint of a withering attack on the Salvation Army. It is of course intended to be nothing of the sort. Yet until the preface is read this wholly erroneous impression persists. And how many theatre-goers can be bothered to read a preface ?

—*Maurice Colbourne*

(29)

Poverty : A Source of Moral Virtue

Similarly, *The Apple Cart* and *On The Rocks* are projections on to the stage of his growing dissatisfaction with the workings and results of political democracy, the reasons for which are set out in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* and *Everybody's Political What's What*. *Getting Married* is a dramatic presentation of his criticism of the marriage system on the ground that it saddles the right to have a child with the obligation to live with and look after a man, and *Major Barbara*, of his criticism of the capitalist social and economic system, which seeks to reconcile the many to the poverty which is a necessary condition of its own successful functioning, by

representing poverty as a source of moral virtue in the present and a guarantee of heavenly reward in the hereafter, while at the same time mitigating its worst effects, blunting its revolutionary edge and satisfying its own guilty conscience by the practice and patronage of charity.

—C. E. M. Joad

(30)

The Play's Meaning

There is a great theme in *Major Barbara*, though G. B. S. muffs it, except in his brilliant second act This is one of the plays about rebels which is also a play about a great individual. Shaw calls it an example of "the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination," a piece of "tragi-comic irony," but he could better have called it the tragedy of an idealist who discovers that her ideals are false, or cannot be realised in her lifetime. Barbara is shaken to the heart's core when the Salvation Army accepts money from brewers and distillers and manufacturers of guns and shells, and, in her despair, throws up her commission.

But her father, the wisest person in the play, restores her sense of proportion in the last act when he answers her complaint that she, who had so nearly saved the soul of Bill Walker, the guttersnipe of the second act, had lost him through her father's gift of pounds 5,000 to the Army's funds. "Does my daughter despair so easily ?" he asks. "Can you strike a man to the heart and leave no mark on him ?" His reply sobers Barbara. "You may be a devil," she replies, "but God speaks through you sometimes !" She has learnt the lesson that truly religious people with keen spiritual insight have always learnt, that God is not particular about the instrument he uses : he is particular only about the purpose he achieves with it. Abraham was undoubtedly a mean and cowardly man whom we rightly suspect of consenting to his wife's seduction by the Pharaoh, but God, nevertheless, used him for his purpose. William Booth would have said much the same to Barbara had she gone to him to complain that the Army had taken money from men who were the cause of sin. Why should he not use their wealth for his purpose ? When reproved for singing hymns to music-hall tunes, he replied that he saw no reason why the devil should have all the best tunes.

—John Ervine

(31)

The Style of "Major Barbara"

The layout of *Major Barbara* was characteristic of his style. Who but he would have opened *You Never Can Tell* in the surgery of an impoverished dentist or have ended his first act by making the dentist give a patient gas before he began to pull out a tooth ? Would any other dramatist have made the principal character in the play an old waiter whose son was a member of the bar and a 'silk' ? The second act of *Major Barbara* is laid in a Salvation Army shelter in West Ham, and a brilliant act it is : almost a complete play in itself. The other two acts are laid, the first in a West End drawing-room and the third, partly in the drawing-room and partly in a model ammunition factory town.

He was careless in writing the paly, as lazy over it as Shakespeare was over Henry VIII, which is one of the worst-bungled plays ever written by a man of supreme genius. He had not made up his mind about Barbara, nor had Shakespeare made up his mind about the King. Who is the principal character in Henry VIII ? Henry Irving had no doubt about this when he produced the play. He took the part of Wolsley. The title suggests that the King is the principal character, but the Cardinal takes a more prominent part than Henry does in the beginning of the play, though Cranmer looks like acting him off the stage at the end. Queen Katherine lives in our minds as vividly as her husband, and so, indeed, does that poor little creature, Anne Bullen. The title of G. B. S.'s play predisposes us to regard Barbara as the principal character, but her father, Andrew Undershaft, reduces her stature, as he reduces his wife's, every time he opens his lips.

—*John Ervine*

(32)

Characterization in "Major Barbara"

The play is curiously incoherent, and three of the characters are little more than lumber : Stephen, the son ; Sarah, one of the daughters ; and Charles Lomax who is Sarah's young man. Sarah is scarcely alive. Lomax is a lay figure of fun. The best that can be said for him is that he has some resemblance to Mr. Tite Barnacle in *Little Dorrit* ; and he may be described as that bureaucrat's debilitated grandson Stephen, who starts off well enough, peters out. The scene between him and his mother, Lady Britomart Undershaft, at the beginning of the play is excellent fun and suggests that Stephen's inevitable revolt against her will be important, but he falls to pieces thereafter and does not appear in the second act. He is Philip Clandon in *You Never Can Tell* run to seed. Lady

Britomart herself is less clearly realised than Mrs. Clandon, and she, too, loses authority as the play develops. She may be described as Ann Whitefield of *Man and Superman* in her middle-age : still seeking and obtaining her own way while pretending that her sole desire is to please other people.

—*John Ervine*

(33)

The Conflict in "Major Barbara"

This is a play of conflict between the individual and society to which there is no resolution except by social redemption. The conflict arises over money, and Shaw puts members of the Salvation Army into the dilemma of accepting for their work among the poor money from a whisky distiller, and an armament manufacturer, or letting that work cease for want of funds. Major Barbara cannot reconcile herself to taking 'tainted money'; her colleague can. The dilemma makes a true dramatic theme, a theme of conscience, which becomes more than personal Shaw states it with definition and objectively, so that his play is first rate dramatic material ; the excess of rhetorical dialectic adds to the pleasure of those who like good talk. The play illustrates Shaw's theory of drama as discussion.

—*C. B. Purdom*

(34)

The Preface to "Major Barbara"

The preface is a magnificent piece of polemical writing. He starts off as he often does by answering his critics : Why should they suppose that he owes his literary ancestry to foreigners ? He is not an Ibsenist, neither is he 'an echo of Schopenhauer,' nor does he get his inspiration from Nietzsche. His ancestry is Irish and English, not Continental, he says with emphasis.

The object of the preface, however, is to make people realize 'the silly levity with which we tolerate poverty' :

> In the millionaire I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate : to wit, that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor.

Here Shaw shows himself to be a prophet, indeed. In 1905 when the play was written, his passionate denunciation of poverty was

regarded as a Shavian paradox. for it was then fully believed that there must always be poor people, for mankind lived in a world of scarcity, and whatever the socialist levellers might say there was barely enough to go round. Today, however, it is not disputed that poverty is a social sin. 'Take your eyes from the ends of the earth and fix them on this truth just under your nose,' shouted Shaw. And he presented his millionaire as an admirable man in every respect because his religion 'recognizes in money the first need and in poverty the vilest sin of man and society.'

—*C. B. Purdom*

(35)

The Theme of Poverty

We must all have money, says Shaw, because we cannot exist without it, and for that reason it is easy to suppose the Salvationists' dilemma to be a false one : 'all our money is tainted...... and there is no money to be had ;' so let us be realistic, not sentimental, and change society, to relieve money from its taint, and enable it to be distributed fairly. There is no rational difficulty about such a way out. But Shaw indicates that while individual attempts to solve the problem are likely to raise more difficulties than the individual can be aware of, Barbara's problem of conscience remains for all of us, and it is Shaw's aim to make the audience realize it Only by grappling with the problem of poverty and solving it can tainted money be avoided, and it may be that the hard way chosen by Barbara is after all the true way. In the play, the relations between husband and wife, and parents and children, are brought up for discussion to relieve the tension. And as the play takes us into the company of the down-and-outs and the lesser criminal types, Shaw declares that punishment should be abolished, and forces us to face the issue that if we cannot put up with the vices of criminals it may be better to send them to the lethal chamber than to prison.

—*C. B. Purdom*

(36)

Undershaft Talks Big

And Undershaft himself ? He talks very big about having been prepared to kill anybody as long as he was poor ; but what did he do ? Did he found his fortunes by knocking an old woman on the head and stealing her watch, or by going into partnership with a Mrs. Warren ? No, of course not ; he stuck to his desk like a good young man, inched and pinched until he had made himself useful to the firm, and then took good care not to be put upon. Undershaft's weakness lay in talking big ; that is really what his sensible wife could not stand. In Act II he tells his son that he and Lazarus are

really the people who govern England, and decide questions of war and peace ; and in Act III he explains to Cusins that he is a fool if he accepts the partnership in the hope of power, since he and Lazarus are in fact absolutely powerless. In both cases he is talking big.

—*Desmond MacCarthy*

(37)

The Moral of the Play

The moral of the play filtered from Undershaft's plutocratic gospel would run as follows : that the ideal state is one in which no one is poor ; that the ideal man is he who shifts vigorously for himself ; that the best cure for the present anarchic and miserable state of things, is that every individual should become self-reliant and use the weapons which Undershaft manfactures against those who oppress him ; that those who have already some wealth and independence are the people it is most profitable to teach what is good ; that to the rest it is more important to preach rebellion. If *Man and Superman* is in a sense the cry of reformer clinging to the idea of selective breeding of mankind in the wreck of his hopes, *Major Barbara* expresses the disappointed impatience of pamphleteer who gives up his belief in persuasion and turns to the swifter agency of force. The fallacy which the play attacks with perfect justice, is that of preaching to or of helping the poor simply because they are poor.

—*Desmond MacCarthy*

(38)

The Shelter Scene

The scene at the Salvation Army shelter is a remarkable piece of low-life melodrama, equalled in English only by the works of O'Casey. The refugees at the barracks include a cynically smart young man and an old crone, both posing as redeemed sinners, and Peter Shirley, who is brought in a state of semi-starvation, turned out of his job as overage, Shirley finds the necessity of accepting charity all the more bitter because he holds the faith of a secularist, in contrast to the others who believe in nothing but their right to bilk and exploit capitalist society as it has bilked and exploited them. Finally, Bill Walker enters, a half-drunk, blustering bully in a very mean mood, who bawls angrily for his girl, and curses the Army for taking her from him.

The scene ends with Barbara's struggle for Bill's soul. This is a fight which comes very near to success and only fails through a stroke of diatribe on the part of her father. The latter frustrates her

simply by demonstrating that although the Salvation Army can afford to refuse to sell the blackguard his salvation for twenty shillings, it cannot, no matter how scrupulous it affects to be, refuse to sell the millionaire his for, say, five thousand pounds. Barbara had refused to accept her father's tuppence in the collection plate because the money was earned through the creation of destructive forces far more brutal in their effect than anything the slum ruffian might aspire to. But when the Army commissioner comes to plead for money to carry on the Army's work in a hard winter, she is forced to accept Undershaft's proffer of the aforementioned thousands despite his sardonic emphasis on the terrifying nature of his enterprises. The ruffian, when he sees the rich man's gift accepted where his own conscience money was rejected, turns on Barbara with cynical scorn, and Barbara, facing at once the failure of her attempt at salvation and a realization that the Salvation Army, if it is to exist at all, can only exist as the pensioner of the distillery and the cannon industry, utters her bitter heart-rending cry of despair, "My God : why hast thou forsaken me ?"

—*Louis Crompton*

(39)

The Conversion of Barbara

The conversion of Barbara, on which the play turns, is essentially conversion to the acceptance of wealth. As part of Shaw's campaign against idealism, or more precisely 'Impossibilism' as it was currently termed among the Fabians, *Major Barbara* sets itself against false pride in unrealizable commodities. Beyond the temptation to refuse tainted money lies the more pernicious temptation to keep out of the market-place altogether. The position from which Cusins has begun to emerge in pursuit of Barbara, when the play begins, represents the negation from which he and Barbara have to be saved : the retirement of the intellectual, poet, or saint, possible only as a form of privilege (Oxford—surely it is Oxford ?—being in 1906 no more an exposed position in society, no less comfortable than Wilton Crescent, as Lady Britomart's acceptance of Cusins recognizes ; scholars are gentlemen, and 'nobody can say a word against Greek'). Shaw uses Cusin's intellectual clarity to make explicit, near the end of the play, the realist's view of selling the soul in compromise with the world :

> It is not the sale of my soul that troubles me : I have sold it too often to care about that. I have sold it for a professorship. I have sold it for an income. I have sold it to escape being imprisoned for refusing to pay taxes for hang-men's ropes and unjust wars and things that I abhor...

Before we reach this point, our acceptance of the statement as a truism has been prepared by Shaw's confrontation of the Faustian theme of the bargain with its connotations in the central Christian myth.

—*Margery M. Morgan*

(40)

Major Barbara : A Greek Drama

Shaw knew classical drama well and he followed its form very often, not, of course, because it was classical, but because it served his purpose. He wrote in the short prefatory note to *Getting Married*: 'I find in practice that the Greek form is inevitable when drama reaches a certain point of poetic and intellectual evolution.' Here is he referring only to the Unities, to which he was uncommonly faithful, in several of his orthodox no less than in his disquisitory plays, but there are other characteristics of Greek drama, which we shall refer to *Major Barbara* (since this is the play we are discussing). The *parabasis*, for example, is custom-built for Undershaft as he swings into one of his Shavian speeches on poverty. The chorus is Cusins as he stands between Undershaft and Barbara, commenting on each and interpreting their religious conflict to the audience—a perfectly natural thing for a 'collector of religions' to do. The messenger is Bill Walker : at least, his return to the shelter after his humiliation under the knees of the terrible Todger and his tale of ignominy may be seen as the old practice turned to excellent modern account. Then, there is the Discovery, or revelation of hidden identity, which Shaw employs in Cusins's disclosure of his origins. The disclosure is perhaps of non-identity—an amusing inversion—but whichever up it is, it provides one of the big surprises in the play. Cusins is indeed something of a compendium of classical devices, for as Murray tells us :

> An element in the Year Ritual in most Greek communities was a mysterious foundling, recognized at the end of the story as a semi-divine being, son of a God and the local princess. At one time (this was) a common theme of tragedy...

Cusins may now be seen as this foundling, whose father becomes the 'God' Undershaft and mother the 'princess' Lady Britomart—much to her annoyance.

—*Leon Hugo*

(41)

An Echo of 'The Bacchae'

...but there is so insistent an echo of *The Bacchae* that we cannot regard it as accident. This Professor of Greek is practically a spokesman of Euripides. He cites him readily, 'quotes' some Euripidean stanzas (very poor stanzas), equates the work done by the Salvation Army with the Dionysian ecstasy. He refers to Undershaft as the Prince of Darkness and as Dionysus. He loses himself completely to this modern god who leads the dithyramb with resounding bangs on his bass drum. Then as though Shaw were putting the final archetypal touch to Cusins' 'conversion', he has him spend the evening imbibing the god's Spanish burgundy : Cusins explains : 'I think it was Dionysus who made me drunk...I told you I was possessed.'

Possessed by Undershaft, who whether, 'manifest God' or not, has returned to his home and visits the Salvation Army shelter to claim his favourite daughter, Barbara, for his own. At the Shelter he brings his 'divine alchemy' to bear on Cusins, on the entire Salvation Army, eventually on Barbara : the 'divine alchemy' of Money. A short while later, at his armament factory, the second part of his creed is presented : Gunpowder. The destructive power in this, so vividly and 'brutally' indicated in the mutilated dummy soldiers on the stage and Undershaft's 'callous' talk of slaughtered armies, may be related to the dismembering and mutilation of Pentheus in *The Bacchae* ; in the old mysteries this represented the death of the old order and the accession of the new. But Pentheus's body, we may remember, was put together again : this signifies that restoration grew out of death. So money and Gunpowder shall destroy poverty and the ideals that tolerated poverty in order to restore prosperity to the world.

—*Leon Hugo*

(42)

Undershaft's City : A Grecian Idyll

To conclude this review, there is the contrast of sets—the miserable, cold, and dingy Salvation Army shelter and the spacious view of Perivale St. Andrew. This points of course to the poverty-money thesis, and accentuates Shaw's belief that salvation of the soul without the prior salvation of the body was hopeless. But we may detect something more than sociological comment here, for Undershaft's city, as Shaw describes it, surely suggests a panorama of the Grecian idyll, with tall, slender factory chimneys imaging the pillars of ancient temples, and the eminence from which we gaze down (here, where a huge cannon is mounted and thehigh explosives

are made) suggesting the seat of Zeus himself. Alongside this visual contrast is the allegory of change, the implied opposition between hunger and satisfaction, degradation and uppishness, winter and summer. Undershaft's descripition of poverty suggests the deathly chill of winter ; the noisome breath of the plague :

> Poverty blights whole cities ; spreads horrible pestilence ; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it.

—Leon Hugo

(43)

Undershaft : A Mystic

The Bacchae reflects two transcending characteristics of the Dionysian cult, the first to do with morality, the second with the emotions. Morality is the wrong word, but no other will do, our range of concepts being as limited as they are ; morality really stops short of Dionysus, for this god knows no morality ; nor does he know immorality, or, for that matter, amorality and unmorality. He was simply the pagan I AM, being neither pitiless nor pitying, neither merciless nor merciful, neither full of hate nor full of love. He is the deification of the natural cycle and supremely true only to himself. It may be that some of the greatness of Greek drama begins here, in the acknowledgement of a divinity as inevitable as the rising sun, as miraculous as bursting leaves. It seems certain that Shaw was fired by these qualities, and by a third, the sheer determinism of the god's declaration of himself. Here in what we may regard as the prime ethic of nature, in this MUST and WILL BE of the manifestation, is the key to an understanding of *Major Barbara*.

Undershaft's gospel is patently derived from this ethic. He boldly flaunts his motto, UNASHAMED, in the eyes of horrified conventionality, usurps the plaintive 'oughts' of timid liberalism and reinstates the full-blooded 'shall' of Dionysus, turns his machine-guns and cannons and aerial torpedoes on mankind to wipe out poverty and slavery, dealing in and thriving on death so that world might be reborn to full life. He proudly quotes his predecessors, all of whom, not necessarily excluding the one who had no literary skill, give evidence of a decided bent for the paradox of mystical utterance. This is the point : Undershaft is an out-and-out mystic who has the power of life in his hands because he has the power of death. The tension of opposites implicit here is no resolution, and for this reason many people who know the play are disturbed. But resolution is impossible : the lyre is not a lyre if the tension is removed ; the harmony of the quivering strings resides precisely in opposite tendencies. The harmony of the spheres, as Pythagoras postulated

this, derives from the magical numbers of the taut bow. What is at variance agrees with itself : creation strains against itself : life is all one.

—*Leon Hugo*

(44)

Religion in "Major Barbara"

To which one may imagine the response that Shaw is taking the Devil out of Hell and putting him back in Heaven. He is not, of course. To him there is no Devil and Hell shall be obliterated when poverty is obliterated. If further response should be that an abolished Devil displays a hopeful rather than realistic view of evil, Shaw's answer in the play is that hope—the hope expressed by Barbara in the epiphany—when coupled with power can be the only admissible religious reality.

But the quarrel goes on, and the most urgent protest, raised by Barbara's cry "My God : why hast thou forsaken me ?" and teased to anger by the glorification of Money and Gunpowder, is : "What about Jesus ?" Which Jesus ? the play asks : the Jesus who on the one hand condones and even makes shift to exalt the hideous face of physical starvation and spiritual degradation and on the other hand condones and even makes shift to accept Bodger's bribe for salvation—the Jesus of doublethink and two faces, of deprivation for the many and privilege for the few : the Jesus of Crosstianity ? Or the Jesus who condemns and would make every shift to eradicate the crime of poverty and the crime of parasitic wealth, the humanitarian Jesus, who so loves the world that he would destroy it to make his word manifest : the Jesus of Dionysian Christianity ? Shaw repudiates the first Jesus : he makes this the very price of salvation : he cleaves to the second Jesus, and makes this the prize of salvation.

It is a kind of Augean cleansing of the soul that Barbara endures and Shaw would have the world endure. Crosstianity must be scraped ; a religion that fitted the facts must be introduced. We may, if we wish, call this Christian, or Dionysian, or Christian—Dionysian, or whatever else in whatever combinations that appeal. Religion, as Shaw saw it, as Cusins saw it, as Undershaft saw it, and as Barbara comes to see it, is not true by virtue of the name coupled to it :

> The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder. Dionysus or another : what does it matter ?

It does not matter one jot. What does matter is the universal religion, that which makes Moslem, Buddhist, Christian, and

pagan, brothers, uniting them in the family of humanity. That which Shaw has attempted to reali·e by going back to the source of Western (perhaps also Eastern) religious practice ; by drawing an ethical philosophy from it. By trying in Acts II, and III, and in my view succeeding thrillingly, to recreate the spirit of eternal religion – the excitement, the ecstasy of surrender to something greater than one's self.

—*Leon Hugo*

(45)

The Drama of Ideas

The peculiarly Shavian variety of Ibsenite dramatic structure, imitated from the Platonic dialogues, is evident in the verbal debates, rationally conceived and conducted to a great extent—especially in the last act—in abstract terms. This is the drama of ideas in exemplary form. But there is much more to the play than this. The realism of its settings—the library in Wilton Crescent, the Salvation Army shelter in Canning Town, and the especially topical Garden City—establishes it as a critique of actual society that reveals the spectrum of class and its cruel contrasts, as *Man and Superman* did not. Changes of setting are matched by changes in dramatic style. Wealth, aristocracy and the culture that goes with them play out a comedy of manners in Act I ; Dickensian realism verging on melodrama invades Act II, in the Salvation Army shelter, bare and chill, with its horse-trough as derisive comment on the poorly dressed wretches at their free meal ; Act III presents a Utopia designed by contemporary paternalism, and theory reigns there—a front for the Satanic mills that produce the wealth of Wilton Crescent, or that, differently directed, could blow the whole unequal system sky-high. Metaphysically, Perivale St. Andrews represents the spiritual cosmos, heaven and hell and the battlefield of the world (in its fort with dummy soldiers), corresponding to the emotional range—touching tragedy and ecstasy—that the play embraces. The action of *Major Barbara* contains thinly disguised versions of folk-lore quests and divine rituals, as well as sharp clashes of personality, to set off the philosophy. The dialectical scheme is strongly supported by mythopoetic patterns and humanized by a rich assortment of characters. The second act in particular with its centrally placed sub-plot, involving Barbara with a character from a sub-group, Bill Walker, is highly exciting in the place of its symbolically weighted action and the intense sense of crisis it conveys. Energy, one is reminded, is the stuff of drama.

—*Margery M. Morgan*

(46)

The Theme of Money in "Major Barbara"

The whole play is flagrantly concerned with money. The first scene, set in the luxurious and stately library of the house in Wilton Crescent and dominated by the opulent physical presence of Lady Britomart, laps us round in an atmosphere of womblike security. The unreality of material need and adversity, in this context, comes through all the more clearly for Lady Britomart's talk of economy. If it were anxious talk, the whole effect would be destroyed ; but there is no anxiety in Lady Britomart's make-up : she is the abundant and nerve-failing earth-mother of the peak of the golden year. In explaining to Stephen their financial situation, she is merely eliciting the moral approval she thinks due to her ; she knows the easy and comfortable solution to her problems—such as they are !—and will apply it quite unscrupulously and without false pride ; for she is free of the personal uncertainty that needs to worry about pride. In the first few minutes of the dialogue, we learn of the money available : the Lomax millions (though Charles will not inherit for ten years) ; the 'poverty' of the Earl of Stevenage on 'barely seven thousand a year' and her own personal income, enough to keep one fairly in its present luxury. The date is 1906, and the value of the pound is high.

Anyway, Shaw has thoughtfully provided a cost-of-living index within the play : thirty-eight shillings a week is the standard wage paid by that model employer, Andrew Undershaft ; in the first scene itself, her mother's standard of poverty can be measured against the reference to Barbara discharging her maid and living on a pound a week—a gesture with more of eccentricity about it than real ascetism, for she still lives in Wilton Crescent and, when we see her, is the perfect representative of physical well-being—plump with nourishment, rosy-cheeked and 'jolly' with health, brisk with energy......

—*Margery M. Morgan*

(47)

The Treatment of Religion in "Major Barbara"

Shaw, indeed, introduced a valid criticism of Nietzsche when he identified the Salvation Army not only with the worshippers of Dionysus, but also with the Church Militant of the risen Christ. His representation of Christianity as a variety of dionysiac religion corrects Nietzsche's exaggeration of its 'subjective' quality, which made possible his over-schematic view of the opposition between Christianity and Dionysus-Antichrist. The Preface to *Major*

Barbara distinguishes between true Christianity and Crosstianity, the religion of negation, of sin and guilt, suffering and death, submission and deprivation. Within the play, a process of redemption is enacted through a bargaining for souls and a vicarious sacrifice. It is a redemption of Christianity itself. Undershaft does not destroy the Salvation Army ; he is ready partly to identify himself with it, more ready to identify it with himself, as, in order to win Barbara, he buys it with his cheque to Mrs Baines, the Commissioner. Barbara's spiritual pilgrimage takes her through disillusion and despair to a rebirth of hope and a new vision. Her private emotional experience enforces the recognition that 'the way of life lies through the factory of death,' that destruction has its proper place in a healthy scheme of things, and even religion and morality must change in order to survive. Her spiritual death and resurrection contain the promise of a new social order : the money for which she was betrayed brought the freedom of Bill Walker's soul.

—*Margery M. Morgan*

(48)

Major Barbara : A Medieval Morality

The battle for the soul of Barbara which principally motivates the action in *Major Barbara* is in the nature of a psychomachia, the visible projection of the spiritual ambivalence of a conscientious Fabian and in this light the play takes on the exemplary character of a medieval morality. The contest is won by Barbara's father, the Mephistophelean munitions magnate, a fascinating personage characterized in rather more detail than is customary in personifications of this type. Nevertheless, the plot obviously transcends the limits of the action. It suggests the agelong struggle between God and the devil for the soul of man ; and as one might expect, it is the devil who wins.

The moral implications of the situation are, accordingly, of considerably greater interest than the events which generate them. *Major Barbara* is a play intended to provoke discussion, and the sentimental involvements of the characters, indispensable to a comedy designed for a wide public, are beggared by the importance of the theme. This is developed principally in two scenes – the colloquy between Undershaft and Cusins in the Salvation Army shelter, and the triangular discussion in the munitions plant in the last act. The rest of the play is no more than the dramatic armature on which these scenes are mounted.

—*Maurice Valency*

(49)

The Theme of Poverty and Money

Therefore, in contradistinction to the Christian doctrine which inspires the Salvation Army, Undershaft advocates war to the death against hunger and misery :

> I had rather be a thief than a pauper. I had rather be a murderer than a slave. I dont want to be either ; but if you force the alternative on me, then, by Heaven, I'll choose the braver and more moral one. I hate poverty and slavery more than any other crimes whatsoever.

It is along such lines that Undershaft's topsy-turvy morality is justified. Once it is granted that poverty is the worst of evils, the individual is justified in defending himself against it in whatever way he can, and a wholly new system of morality develops foreign alike to the classic and Christian conception. If poverty is evil, it is sinful to be poor. In the preface to *Major Barbara* Shaw wrote.........."Money is the most important thing in the world. It represents health, strength, honor, generosity and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness and ugliness."

While Undershaft has no scruples about the manner in which wealth is acquired..Barbara has Like Trench, in the first two acts of *Widower's Houses*, she has idealistic notions concerning the quality of money, and she refuses to accept Bill Walker's expiatory sovereign because it is impure.. She tells Walker : "There is bad blood on your hands ; and nothing but good blood can cleanse them. Money is no use. Take it away." She is badly shocked, in consequence, when Mrs. Baines eagerly accepts Bodger's offer of money, as well as Undershaft's gift for the preservation of her organization. Barbara, evidently, is a romantic idealist ; Mrs. Baines, a realist. Like Undershaft ,she subordinates the means to the end, and she has an administrator's eye for contributions, whatever their source.

— *Maurice Valency*

(50)

The Theme of Power

The preface suggests a different end to the story : that Barbara will later return to the Salvation Army :

> With the knowledge......that when General Booth chose Blood and Fire for the emblem of Salvation instead of the Cross, he was perhaps better inspired than he knew.

For it is necessary, Shaw goes on to say, to fight the devil instead of merely praying at him, as the French Encyclopedists found ; the aristocracy admired their writings, but fought against their translation into practice. And the same lesson was repeated in Shaw's own experience :

> I, who have preached and pamphleteered like any Encyclopedist, have to confess that my methods are no use.

By implication, Shaw states the lesson clearly enough : capitalism can no more be abolished by reasoning with the capitalists than feudalism could be abolished by reasoning with the aristocrats ; the people must have the power to destroy their enemies. He does not, however, draw the lesson.........

But if there is hope only in the Salvation Army, why should Barbara ever leave it ? Shaw is afraid of his own idea. "I want to make power for the world," says Cusins, as he takes over the armaments factory. The lesson of history, Shaw repeats in the preface, is that the people must have power. But neither in the play nor the preface will Shaw face the fact that it is the working-class that must have power to use against the capitalist class.

—Alick West

29

Selected Critical Questions With Answers

Q. 1. Give a critical evaluation of the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 2. What advice does Shaw give to critics in the section "First Aid to Critics" in the Preface to *Major Barbara* ?

Or

Q. 3. Shaw's 'Prefaces' are an important part of his total writings. Bring out the significance of this statement.

Or

Q. 4. Give a critical summary of the section "First Aid to Critics" of the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Introduction

Shaw's 'Prefaces' are an important part of his total writings, and they are a splendid addition to modern English prose literature. In the collected *Prefaces by Bernard Shaw* published in 1938, Shaw explained clearly in an introduction why they were written :

> I hope it is not necessary for me to remind critics unversed in literary tradition that the prefaces to my plays have nothing to do with the theatre. Most of them were written long after the plays to which they are attached had been repeatedly performed. The practice of weighting volumes of plays with political and philosophical disquisitions dates back to Dryden ; and I have kept it up in a simple desire to give my customers good value for their money by eking out a pennorth of play with a pound of preface.

According to C. B. Purdom, Shaw "published his plays in the first instance because the theatre would not have them and made them tolerable for reading by lengthy and highly interesting descriptions

of the stage settings and the characters; the Prefaces were added for the sake of the reader. These were, he said, 'a series of pamphlets and essays on current political and social problems.' He said explicitly that they 'have nothing to do with the theater,' and it is true that if one looks at a Preface with the object of getting an introduction to the play one is generally disappointed."

Apart from the commercial reason for writing the Prefaces there was another, more important, motive. Shaw was inexhaustible, and he could always find more to say about any subject that interested him than he could include in a play. Shaw writes :

> You may well ask me why...I took the trouble to write them. I can only reply that I do not know. There was no why about it : I had to : that was all.

It is true, up to a point, that the Prefaces are independent of the plays. That is to say that the plays can usually be understood and enjoyed without knowing the Prefaces, but a reading of the latter will always enhance the pleasure a reader can obtain from the plays.

Shaw was a debator and the Prefaces show the argumentative Shaw at his best. He wrote his Prefaces to open men's minds, to convince and convert them to his own point of view, to puncture a host of social institutions and beliefs, and with this end in view he disdains none of the tricks of the debator and the rhetorician. He could not exercise all his intellectual powers fully in the plays, so he uses his Prefaces for further elucidation and exposition.

Preface to Major Barbara : Its Significance

The Preface to *Major Barbara* contains seven sections in forty-one pages in the Penguin edition. Shaw's own literary ancestry is related in the Preface to the nineteenth-century Irish novelist Charles Lever, from whom he drew inspiration for his own dealing in "the tragi-comic irony of the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination"; to Belfort Bax's essays on feminist matters and contemporary morality; and to Samuel Butler for the conviction that 'the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty', the conviction which is the root principle in the gospel of Andrew Undershaft the munitions magnate in *Major Barbara*. The Preface also expounds Shaw's views on such matters as The Salvation Army, Christianity and Anarchism, etc.

First Aid to Critics : Advice to Critics

Shaw begins the Preface to *Major Barbara* by protesting against the unpatriotic habit of his critics who conclude hastily that Shaw has borrowed his views from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ibsen,

Strindberg, Tolstoy, and some other European philosophers and authors. Shaw points out that the truth is that he is familiar with the works of a very few European writers, and has not read many of them. He declares that in most cases his views are derived from earlier English writers, some of whom were his immediate predecessors. For instance, his concept of "the tragi-comic irony of the conflict between real life and the romantic imagination", is foreshadowed in his immediate forerunner, Charles Lever, while the critics attribute it to Ibsen, a Norwegian author, of whose language I do not know three words. He says that he is not Ibsenist even at second hand ; for Lever, though he may have read Henri Beyle, *alias* Stendhal, certainly never read Ibsen. Charles Lever (1806-72) wrote *A Day's Ride* (1863) which is concerned with the adventures of Algernon Sydney Potts, and obscure Irishman who indulges in fantastic self-deception about his origin and social rank. Shaw says that the story of *A Day's Ride* and life's romance of Potts caught him and fascinated him, something strange and significant, though he already knew all about Don Quixote and many other romantic heroes mocked by reality. "From the plays of Aristophanes to the tales of Stevenson that mockery has been made familiar to all who are properly saturated with letters."

Shaw continues : "Another mistake as to my literary ancestry is made whenever I violate the romantic convention that all women are angels when they are not devils ; that they are be ter looking than men ; that their part in courtship is entirely passive ; and that the human female form is the most beautiful object in nature." Critics generally say that he has echoed the views of the German philosopher Schopenhauer. In fact he was familiar with the views of an English socialist and an essayist Belfort Bax. Shaw points out :

> As a matter of fact I hardly noticed Schopenhauer's disparagements of women when they came under my notice later on, so thoroughly had Bax familiarized me with the homoist attitude, and forced me to recognize the extent to which public opinion, and consequently legislation and jurisprudence, is corrupted by feminist sentiment.

Similarly, his criticism of English "mercanto-Christian morality" is not derived from Nietzsche or any other foreign source. It is pointed out that he (Shaw) borrowed the word superman from Nietzsche and that he looked for the salvation of society to the despotism of a single Napoleonic Superman. But this is far from truth. His objection to Christianity as a wicked "slave-morality" is also traced to Nietzsche. But he was familiar with these concepts much before he heard of Nietzsche. It may be traced to a recent English writer, Captain Wilson, who coined the phrase "Crosstianity" for the retrigrade element in Christianity, and who denounced

the teaching of Christ in the "Sermon on the Mount as excuses for cowardice and servility, as destructive of our will, and consequently of our honor and manhood."

Criticism of Christianity

Shaw points out that Captain Wilson's criticism of Christianity was not a historical theory, like Nietzsche's. But the source of these views may be traced to the writings of Stuart-Glennie, the successor of Buckle as a philosophic historian :

> Who devoted his life to the elaboration and propagation of his theory that Christianity is part of an epoch (or rather an aberration, since it began as recently as 6000 B.C. and is already collapsing) produced by the necessity in which the numerically inferior white races found themselves to impose their domination on the colored races by priestcraft, making a virtue and a popular religion of drudgery and submissiveness in this world not only as a means of achieving saintliness of character but of securing a reward in heaven.' Here was the slave-morality view formulated by a Scotch philosopher of my acquaintance long before we all began chattering about Nietzsche.

Shaw's approval of such a view is at the basis of his criticism of conventional religion in *Major Barbara*. He regards Christian morality as an instrument of exploitation devised by those in power.

Shaw goes on to say that Nietzsche regarded the slave-morality as having been invented and imposed on the world by slaves making a virtue of necessity and a religion of their servitude. Whereas Stuart-Glennie regarded "the slave-morality as an invention of the superior white race to subjugate the minds of the inferior races whom they wished to exploit, and who would have destroyed them by force of numbers if their minds had not been subjugated." Shaw adds that this process continues to be in operation in (i) our Church schools, (ii) in the struggle between the rich and poor, (iii) and in the part played by Christian missionaries who reconcile the black races to their subjugation and exploitation by the ruling whites, by European Capitalism. "The initiative for this slave-morality came from above and not from below. That 'Christian-morality' is the instrument of exploitation, is the theme of *Major Barbara* and it has been studied through the work done by the Salvation Army.

Q. 5. Give a critical summary of the section "The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft" of the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 6. According to Shaw "Poverty is the worst of crimes". Bring out the significance of this statement with special reference to the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 7. What is the religion of Gospel of Andrew Undershaft as explained by Shaw in the Preface to *Major Barbara* ?

Or

Q. 8. Undershaft's religion recognizes that Money is the first need and that Poverty is the vilest sin of man and society. Elaborate this statement with special reference to the section called "The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft" in the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Undershaft's Religion

Having warned his critics against attributing his views to the foreign writers Shaw talks about *Major Barbara*. About Undershaft he writes :

> In the millionaire Undershaft I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate : to wit, that the greatest of our evils, and the worst of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor. "Poor but honest", "the respectable poor," and such phrases are as intolerable and as immoral as "drunken but amiable", "fraudulent but a good after-dinner speaker", "splendidly criminal", or the like. Security, the chief pretence of civilization, cannot exist where the worst of dangers, the danger of poverty, hangs over everyone's head, and where the alleged protection of our persons from violence is only an accidental result of the existence of a police force whose real business is to force the poor man to see his children starve while idle people overfeed pet dogs with the money that might feed and clothe them.

Undershaft is the spokesman of Shaw and *Major Barbara* is an interesting exposition of the evils of poverty. Shaw advocates the eradication of the evil of poverty.

Poverty Not To Be Glorified

Shaw emphasises that poverty is the worst of crimes, that it is the root cause of all social evils. There are two types of criminals—moral invalids or energetic rebels. "But the thoughtless wickedness

with which we scatter sentences of imprisonment, torture in the solitary cell and on the plank bed, and flogging, on moral invalids and energetic rebels, is as nothing compared to the silly levity with which we tolerate poverty as if it were either a wholesome tonic for lazy people or else a virtue to be embraced as St. Francis embraced it. If a man is indolent, let him be poor. If he is drunken, let him be poor. If he is not a gentleman, let him be poor. If he is addicted to the fine arts or to pure science instead of to trade and finance, let him be poor. If he chooses to spend his urban eighteen shillings a week or his agricultural thirteen shillings a week on his beer and his family instead of saving it for his old age, let him be poor. Let nothing be done for "the undeserving" : let him be poor. Serve him right ! Also—somewhat inconsistently—blessed are the poor !"

Shaw asks what does poverty mean ? Poverty means let the poor be weak. "Let him become a nucleus of disease. Let him be a standing exhibition and example of ugliness and dirt. Let him have rickety children. Let him be cheap, and drag his fellows down to his own price by selling himself to do their work. Let his habitations turn our cities into poisonous congeries of slums. Let his daughters infect our young men with the diseases of the streets, and sons revenge him by turning the nation's manhood into scrofula, cowardice, cruelty, hypocrisy, political imbecility, and all the other fruits of oppression and malnutrition."

Shaw's Suggestions

Shaw suggests that the eradication of poverty is the cure of all ills of society. Through the eradication of poverty crime can be prevented Poverty is the one thing we should not tolerate. Everybody should be assured of work. Those who are not prepared to work should be killed, and every child should be well-fed and clothed. It would be a better way of dealing with crime than the present destructive way of inflicting inhuman punishment on those who have been driven to crime by their poverty and social injustice. Shaw recommends "Universal Pensions for Life", and not merely "old Age Pensions" as a solution to the industrial problem. Shaw further suggests that "the sensible course would be to give every man enough to live well on, so as to guarantee the community against the possibility of a case of the malignant disease of poverty."

Undershaft : The Shavian Hero

Shaw says that Undershaft, the hero of *Major Barbara*, is simply a man who, having grasped the fact that poverty is a crime, knows that when society asked him to choose either poverty or a lucrative trade in death and destruction, it offered him not a choice between villainy and humble virtue, but between energetic enterprise

and cowardly infamy. His conduct is contrasted with that of Peter Shirley. Peter Shirley is the honest poor man, Undershaft is the wicked rich one. Shaw points out that "the misery of the world is due to the fact that the great mass of men act and believe as Peter Shirley acts and believes. If they acted and believed as Undershaft acts and believes, the immediate result would be a revolution of incalculable beneficence. To be wealthy, says Undershaft, is with me a point of honor for which I am prepared to kill at the risk of my own life." Shaw condemns those who live decently on "independent incomes", as the idle rich are called. Such idle people with independent incomes know that they are rich because others are poor. Such people cannot be expected to do anything for the poor. It is for the poor to repudiate poverty.

Condemns Thinkers and Reformers

Shaw condemns thinkers and reformers like Ruskin, William Morris and Kropotkin. They appeal to the aesthetic sense of the poor, and demand beautiful surroundings for them. But the poor do not share their tastes nor understand their art-criticisms. The poor do not want the simple life, nor the aesthetic life. They want money and want to live luxuriously like idle rich people. What they dislike and despise is poverty. The common man does not want to live the life of genius : "He would much rather live the life of a pet collie if that were the only alternative. But he does want more money. Whatever else he may be vague about, he is clear about that. He may or may not prefer Major Barbara to the Drury Lane pantomime ; but he always prefers five hundred pounds to five hundred shillings."

Value of Money

Shaw emphasises the value of money, and those who express their opinion to the contrary are lying hypocrites. Shaw says that the money is the important thing in the world. It represents health, strength, honour, generosity and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness and ugliness :

> The first duty of every citizen is to insist on having money on reasonable terms ; and this demand is not complied with by giving four men three shillings each for ten or twelve hour's drudgery and one man a thousand pounds for nothing. The crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of fallen sisters and erring brothers, nor the grace, love and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagogy, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty.

Undershaft : The Instrument of Life Force

For Shaw the real enemy is not the Devil, but Poverty. It is this enemy which Undershaft fights. In so doing he is the instrument of Life Force, for poverty is the enemy of life. Life Force or Will uses him for purposes wider than his own. His religion is that money is the first need and that poverty is the vilest sin of man and society. This is the Gospel of Sir Andrew Undershaft. Shaw concludes this section by saying that there is nothing new or original in this concept. Nor is it necessary to trace his views in any European writer. Samuel Butler, the English novelist who wrote *The Way of All Flesh*, anticipated him in this respect, and such ideas are now being propagated in England by the plays written by socialists.

Q. 9. Give a critical summary of the section "The Salvation Army" in the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 10. Bring out the significance of the Shelter Scene in Act Two of *Major Barbara* as defended by Shaw in the Preface.

Or

Q. 11. Shaw puts up a spirited defence of Salvation Army in the Preface to *Major Barbara*. Comment.

Or

Q. 12. What lesson does Barbara learn before returning to the colours by the end of the play ?

Or

Q. 13. What defence does Shaw put up in the Preface in favour of the Salvation Army accepting the money of Bodger and Undershaft ?

Shaw's Treatment of the Salvation Army

When *Major Barbara* was first produced in London, the second act was considered by the critics as a withering attack on the Salvation Army. The despairing ejaculation of Barbara "My God, why hast thou forsaken me"—was deplored by a London daily as a tasteless blasphemy. However, the real significance of Act Two was understood and appreciated by a number of religious and philosophical writers. Ironically the play brought about the confrontation between the theatre enthusiasts and the religious enthusiasts. The play showed that religion too can be pursued in a spirit of gaiety. It presented the Salvationists "repudiating

gaiety and courting effort and sacrifice, yet always in the wildest spirit, laughing, joking, singing, rejoicing, drumming, and tambourining. The Salvationists are, in fact, not joyless persons, shut out from the heaven of theatre, self-condemned to a life of hideous gloom. Generally the playgoers come to "think of religious people as people who are not interesting and not amusing. And so, when Barbara cuts the regular Salvation Army jokes, and snatches a kiss from her lover across his drum, the devotees of the theatre think they ought to appear shocked, and conclude that the whole play is an elaborate mockery of the Army."

Shaw points out that just as it is wrong to suppose that theatre-goers are ribald and profane people, so also it is wrong to think that religious people are uninteresting, passionless and boring. It is this negative view which Shaw tried to demolish in *Major Barbara* through his presentation of the Salvation Army.

Army's Acceptance of Money Defended

Secondly, some critics got into difficulties over the demonstration of the economic deadlock in which the Salvation Army finds itself. Some of the critics thought that the Army would not have taken money from a distiller and a cannon founder. The critics assumed that the Salvation Army reduced itself to absurdity or hypocrisy by taking money. However, the Salvationists themselves replied to the objection. They said that the Army would take money from the devil himself and put it into the hands of God. "They gratefully acknowledged that publicans not only give them money but allow them to collect it in the bar—sometimes even when there is a Salvation meeting outside preaching teetotalism. In fact, they questioned the verisimilitude of the play, not because Mrs. Baines took the money, but because Barbara refused it."

Shaw goes on to say that the Salvation Army must take the money because it cannot exist without money, and there is no other money (money which is not tainted) to be had. "Practically all the spare money in the country consists of a mass of rent, interest, and profit, every penny of which is bound up with crime, drink, prostitution, disease, and all the evil fruits of poverty, as inextricably as with enterprise, wealth, commercial probity and national prosperity."

The notion that you can earmark certain coins as tainted is an unpractical individualist superstition. The source of all money is equally corrupt and tainted, and so religious enthusiasts like Barbara must accept the money and "must either share the world's guilt or go to another planet." This is the lesson which all the Churches learn, and this is the lesson, which the Salvation Army and Barbara find in the play.

Barbara Learns a Lesson

Barbara learns the lesson that if she has to take part in the nation, she will have to forget the prejudice against tainted money :

> Her discovery that she is her father's accomplice ; that the Salvation Army is the accomplice of the distiller and the dynamite maker ; that they can no more escape one another than they can escape the air they breathe ; that there is no salvation for them through personal righteousness, but only through the redemption of the whole nation from its vicious, lazy, competitive anarchy : this discovery has been made by everyone except the Pharisees and (apparently) the professional playgoers, who still wear their Tom Hood shirts and underpay their washerwomen without the slightest misgiving as to the elevation of their private characters, the purity of their private atmospheres, and their right to repudiate as foreign to themselves the coarse depravity of the garret and the slum. Not that they mean any harm : they only desire to be, in their little private way, what they call gentlemen. They do not understand Barbara's lesson because they have not, like her, learnt it by taking their part in the larger life of the nation.

Barbara Returns to the Colours

Barbara learns this lesson and so returns to the colours at the end of the play. She goes back to the Salvation Army with the knowledge that even the Salvationists themselves are not saved as yet ; that poverty is not blessed, but a most damnable sin ; and that when General Booth chose "Blood and Fire" for the emblem of the Salvation instead of the Cross, he was perhaps better inspired than he knew. They can be saved only through the fire of suffering and through waging a relentless war against poverty, the real enemy. "Such knowledge, for the daughter of Andrew Undershaft, will clearly lead to something hopefuller than distributing bread and treacle at the expense of Bodger."

It is a very significant thing that General Booth chose the word "Army", and his instinctive choice of the military form of organization, the substitution of the drum for the organ, suggest that the Salvationists think that they must actually fight the devil instead of merely praying at him. At present they may not know that their real enemy is not the Devil, but Poverty, but soon they would understand this. Social revolution cannot be brought about by philosophers, thinkers and writers ; it can be brought about by such militant organizations as the Salvation Army.

Christianity preaches the virtue of submission. The result is that people like Peter Shirley quietly suffer exploitation and injustice. Christianity has made people cowards; the Salvation Army has to raise heroes out of them. The Salvation Army is the only ray of hope. In its presence:

> Fear, which we flatter by calling Self, vanishes; and transfigured men and women carry their gospel through a transfigured world; calling their leader General, themselves captains and brigadiers, and their whole body an Army: praying, but praying only for refreshment, for strength to fight, and for needful Money...; preaching, but not preaching submission: daring ill-usage and abuse, but not putting up with more of it than is inevitable; and practising what the world will let them practise, including soap and water, color and music. There is danger in such activity; and where there is danger there is hope.

Thus Shaw puts up a spirited defence of the Salvation Army in the Preface.

Q. 14. Write a note on the "Weaknesses of the Salvation Army" as pointed out by Shaw in the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 15. What are Shaw's views about crime and punishment as elaborated in the Preface to *Major Barbara*?

Or

Q. 16 Give a critical evaluation of the views of Shaw with reference to Bill Walker in the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 17. Write a note on the character of Bill Walker as presented in the Preface to *Major Barbara*.

Weaknesses of the Salvation Army

In this section of the Preface, Shaw points out that the Salvation Army has almost as many weaknesses as the church of England itself. Some of the weaknesses of the Army are given below:

(1) That Salvation Army is building up a business organization which will compel it eventually to replace its present staff of enthusiast-commanders by bureaucrats who will be no better than bishops of the Church of England, and perhaps a good deal more unscrupulous.

(2) It is even more dependent than the Church on rich people who would cut off supplies (of money) at once if it began to preach that revolt against poverty is indispensable, which would mean a revolt against riches.

(3) The work of the Salvation Army is hampered by a heavy contingent of pious elders who are not really Salvationists, but Evangelicals of the old school. They still believe in the Biblical account of the *genesis*.

(4) There is too much other-worldliness about the Army. The Salvationist wants to live for ever. The Salvationists crave for a life of eternal happiness in the other world. They are in fact afraid of death. They will be really saved only when they are ready to die cheerfully.

(5) Then the Salvation Army encourages "the nasty lying habit called confession." Many of the confessions are false and sheer humbug, and the so-called converts are induced to confess by the bribe of bread and the bribe of heaven. The confession of Snobby Price illustrates the point :

> Salvationists have said to me that Barbara in my play would never have been taken in by so transparent a humbug as Snobby Price ; and certainly I do not think Snobby could have taken in any experienced Salvationist on a point on which the Salvationist did not wish to be taken in. But on the point of conversion all Salvationists wish to be taken in ; for the more obvious the sinner the more obvious the miracle of his conversion . ...As long as such attractions are relied on, you will have your Snobbies claiming to have beaten their mothers when they were as a matter of prosaic fact habitually beaten by them; and your Rummies of the tamest respectability pretending to a past of reckless and dazzling vice.

Shaw goes on to say that a crime once committed remains a crime, despite the confession, and the criminal must not be glorified as the Salvationists do in the case of their converts. Such glorification not only encourages hypocrisy and falsehood, but also crime. Since a man can be saved if he confesses his sins, he may commit more crime and sin, and then confess at leisure. He may thus have the best of both the worlds.

(6) Forgiveness of sinners when they have confessed their sins, and the punishment of criminals by the state are based on false psychology. Punishment is only a pretence of cancelling one crime by another. You will never get a

> high morality from people who conceive that their misdeeds are revocable and pardonable.

The Case of Bill Walker

Shaw says that Bill Walker, after having assaulted the Salvation Lass, finds himself overwhelmed with an intolerable conviction of sin under the skilled treatment of Barbara. He tries to atone for his misdeed, first by getting punished for it in kind, and, when that relief is denied him, by fining himself a pound to compensate the girl. He is foiled both ways. He finds the Salvation Army inexorable. It will not punish him : it will not take his money. It will not tolerate a redeemed ruffian : it leaves him no means of salvation except ceasing to be a ruffian. In doing this, the Salvation Army instinctively grasps the central truth of Christianity—that central truth being the vanity of revenge and punishment.

Again, Bill has assaulted an old and starving woman also, and for this worse offence he feels no remorse, because the malice of the old woman is as great as the crime of Bill. The woman threatens to pay him back in kind by going to the law. Bill Says : "Let her have the law of me, as she said she would. What I done to her is no more on what you might call my conscience than sticking a pig." This shows a perfectly natural and wholesome state of mind on his part :

> The old woman, like the law threatens him with, is perfectly ready to play the game of retaliation with him : to rob him if he steals, to flog him if he strikes, to murder him if he kills. By example and precept the law and public opinion teach him to impose his will on others by anger, violence and cruelty, and to wipe off the moral score by punishment. That is sound Crosstianity. But this Crosstianity has got entangled with something which Barbara calls Christianity, and which unexpectedly causes her to refuse to play the hangman's game of Satan casting out Satan.

Barbara refuses to play this game ; she refuses to prosecute a drunken ruffian ; she converses on equal terms with a blackguard. In short, she imitates Christ. Bill's conscience reacts to this just as naturally as it does to old woman's threats. He is placed in a position of unbearable moral inferiority, and strives by every means in his power to escape from it, whilst he is still quite ready to meet the abuse of the old woman by attempting to smash a mug on her face. And that is the triumphant justification of Barbara's Christianity as against our system of judicial punishment and the vindictive villain-thrashings and 'poetic justice' of the romantic age.

Crime and Punishment

Reviewing the problem of crime and its punishment, Shaw points out that there are millions of Bill Walkers in all classes of society today. Successful millionaires, so highly respected in society, usually begin their careers as brigands—merciless, reckless, and unprincipled—dealing out death and slavery and misery to their employees and their competitors. The Imperialists rob, exploit and ill-treat the natives for their gold, silver and ivory. They use all kinds of wicked and crooked means to get rich. If they are unsuccessful they are treated as scoundrels, tortured and sent to jail. When they come out of prison, they become worse. When they can get no other employment, they take to evil ways and are again punished. And this process continues.

But the successful scoundrel is dealt with differently, and very Christianly. "He is not only forgiven: he is idolized, respected, made much of, all but worshipped. Society returns him good for evil in the most extravagant overmeasure. And with what result? He begins to idolize himself, to respect himself to live up to the treatment he receives. He preaches sermons; he writes books of the most edifying advice to young men, and actually persuades himself that he got on by taking his own advice; he endows educational institutions; he supports charities; he dies finally in the door of sanctity, leaving a will which is a monument of public spirit and bounty. And all this without any change in his character... but the conduct of the world towards him has changed; and his conduct has changed accordingly. You have only to reverse your attitude towards him—to lay hands on his property, revile him, assault him, and he will be a brigand again in a moment, as ready to crush you as you are to crush him, and quite as full of pretentious moral reasons for doing it."

When Major Barbara says that there are no scoundrels, she is right, for there are no absolute scoundrels; every man has within himself the potentialities both for good and evil. It is his circumstances which make him what he is. Characters who behave differently in different circumstances, behave in the same way in similar circumstances.

Bill Walker's Conscience

Shaw returns again to Bill Walker and his conscience against the Salvation Army. Major Barbara refuses to sell salvation to Bill for a sovereign. But unfortunately, what the Army can afford to refuse in the case of Bill Walker, it cannot refuse in the case of Bodger. Bodger is the master of the situation because he holds the purse strings. So they sell salvation to Bodger, though they refuse it to Bill. The Salvation Army will take money from the devil himself sooner than abandon the work of salvation. So Bodger

pays his conscience money and gets the salvation that is refused to Bill. When Bill and others like him come to know this, their faith in religion is shaken, and they come to regard religious organisations as allies of those who oppress and exploit them. Shaw himself points out :

> And this is why no tolerated church nor Salvation Army can ever win the entire confidence of the poor. It must be on the side of the police and the military, no matter what it believes or disbelieves ; and as the police and the military are the instruments by which the rich rob and oppress the poor (on legal and moral principles made for the purpose), it is not possible to be on the side of the poor and of the police at the same time. Indeed the religious bodies, as the almoners of the rich, become a sort of auxiliary police, taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with coals and blankets, bread and treacle, and soothing and cheering the victims with hopes of immense and inexpensive happiness in another world when the process of working them to premature death in the service of the rich is complete in this.

The bribe of bread and the bribe of heaven keep the poor from smashing the doors and windows of the clubs and restaurants of the rich. That is why Bodgers and Undershafts are so willing to render such generous assistance to the Salvation Army.

Q. 18. What does Shaw say about "Christianity and Anarchism" in the Preface to *Major Barbara* ?

Or

Q. 19. Shaw emphasises an urgent need of social reforms in the Preface to *Major Barbara*. Elucidate.

Or

Q. 20. What are the final conclusions drawn by Shaw in the Preface to *Major Barbara* ?

Christianity and Anarchism

Shaw points out that in the present state of affairs the Salvation Army, the Church of England or other religious organizations are dependent on the capitalists. The present social set up is rotten and it can be reformed only through a reconstitution of society. The state exacts money from the poor by way of taxes, and inflicts untold misery and cruelty upon them with the help of the police and the military. The masses suffer the onslaughts of poverty, while the ruling rich wallow in wealth and luxury. The poor, oppressed and downtrodden, suffer from a sense of gross injustice, and in such feelings lie the seeds of anarchism.

The situation can be saved if we return to Christianity. For Shaw there is a true Christianity and a false Christianity. Official Christianity is the false one. It has for its symbol a gibbet (the sign of the cross); it thrills its followers by reminding them of bloody murders and torture to which Christ was subjected), and it believes in absolution and salvation which can be purchased. But there is a nobler and profounder Christianity which affirms the sacred mystery of Equality, and forbids the folly of vengeance, often politely called punishment or justice. The second kind of Christianity is not tolerated, and any one who raises his voice against the folly of punishment and denounces it as vengeance is himself punished for blasphemy. Shaw is a Christian in the second, profounder and nobler sense.

Sane Conclusions

In the last section of the Preface to *Major Barbara* Shaw summarises the whole discussion and gives us the conclusions he has reached. In his view the real solution to the problem of crime lies in making laws which are juster and more reasonable; such laws would elicit the willing cooperation of the people. At present such cooperation is not forthcoming, for the people do not help the police in detecting the criminals and getting them punished. The situation needs to be rectified immediately.

According to Shaw all men are anarchists with regard to laws which are against their consciences. Anarchism spreads when either the magistrates are too old and ignorant to understand the spirit of laws they are called upon to administer, or when there are sudden and violent social upheavals and the existing laws are unable to cope with the situation. Again, when writers, thinkers and philosophers raise their voices against the existing social system, the result is that disrespect for law is generated, and the conditions for revolt become ripe. Now this is not a healthy state of things. Shaw tells us that he himself is—

> a revolutionary writer, because our laws make law impossible; our liberties destroy all freedom; our property is organized robbery; our morality is an impudent hypocrisy; our wisdom is administered by inexperienced or malexperienced dupes, our power wielded by cowards and weaklings, and our honor false in all its points.

Such feelings breed anarchism, and the remedy lies in more just and progressive laws. Firstly, the wealth of the nation should be so distributed that not even the smallest fraction of it goes to those who are able-bodied and healthy, but are not prepared to work for what they consume in the present, as also to compensate society for the cost of their bringing up, and for their maintenance in old age.

Secondly, the deliberate infliction of malicious injuries which now goes on under the name of punishment should be abandoned ; so that the thief, the ruffian, the gambler, and the beggar, may without unhumanity be handed over to the law, and made to understand that a State which is too humane to punish will also be too thrifty to waste the life of honest men in watching or restraining dishonest ones. Instead of imprisoning them, and then letting them out even more hardened and dangerous, criminals must be destroyed straight away, just as dogs which bite are not chained but are killed at once. If there is to be no punishment there can be no forgiveness. Under no circumstances hardened criminals be allowed to expiate their misdeeds by a manufactured penalty, "to subscribe to a charity, or to compensate the victims." Therefore, forgiveness, atonement, and charitable endowments should have no place in the new social order. Either there should be a complete change of heart brought about by the kind of treatment Barbara meted out to Bill Walker, or there should be no salvation at all. Evil must be faced boldly. Bodgers of the world will go on poisoning the life of the people with bad whisky, because they can always depend on the Salvation Army or the Church of England to negotiate a redemption for them in consideration of a trifling percentage of his profits. Crime will flourish so long as salvation can be purchased by the bribe of money.

Thirdly, Shaw advocates that the religions must become intellectually honest. *Major Barbara* is not the record of any real happening, but it is both true and inspired, because it seeks to present the truth about religion.

Q. 21. What is the gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft to which Barbara is converted ? Discuss.

Or

Q. 22. In *Major Barbara* Shaw came to terms, in some measure, with capitalism. Discuss.

Or

Q. 23. According to Undershaft 'Money and gunpowder' are two things necessary to salvation. Comment.

Or

Q. 24. Do you agree with the view that Undershaft represents the 'Life Force' ?

Or

Q. 25. Do you agree with the view that Shaw does not preach the philosophy of violent revolution in *Major Barbara*? Comment.

Or

Q. 26. Shaw is a pacifist and does not welcome revolution. Comment on this statement.

The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft

In *Major Barbara* the capitalist, the armaments manufacturer, the promoter of wars, the power behind governments, is glorified and exalted as the chosen instrument of God; the imperialist is canonized as St. Andrew Undershaft.

His title to sainthood is stated in the Preface, in a section headed "The Gospel of St. Andrew Undershaft":

> In the millionaire Undershaft I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistible natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate: to wit, that the greatest of evils, and the worst of crimes is poverty, and that our first duty—a duty to which every other consideration should be sacrificed—is not to be poor.

This is not ironical. For having stated in the Preface to *The Irrational Knot* that the "fundamental sanity and right-mindedness" of "all our governing classes", consists in their readiness to "batter in the doors of their fellow man, seal them up, sweat them in fetid dens, shoot, stab, hang, imprison, sink, burn and destroy them in the name of law and order," so that they themselves may have enough money to live "a handsome, free, proud, costly life." Shaw goes on to say that the rest of us are so corrupted by the false morality of virtuous poverty that—

> We shall pretend that this straighforward truth of mine is mere Swiftian satire, because it would require a little courage to take it seriously and either act on it or make me drink hemlock for uttering it.

This is the gospel to which St. Andrew Undershaft converts his daughter Barbara from her saving of men's souls with the bribe of happiness in heaven and Cusins from his teaching of Greek and his translating of Euripides.

Cusins admits the gospel truth, for he has already acted on it. When the Greeks and Turks were at war and his best pupil went out to fight for Hellas, Cusins's parting gift to him was "not a copy of Plato's *Republic*, but a revolver and a hundred Undershaft catridges." Facing and accepting the logic of his action, he enters Undershaft's armaments factory, and Barbara goes with him, in order to "make power with the world", to arm the common man, and to wipe out of existence the so-called civilization founded on poverty and slavery and maintained by a morality of cowardice

This is the culmination of both Shaw's daydreams of anarchism and of his compromise with capitalism, which is the practical outcome of those daydreams. The capitalist is obeying his will; if all men obeyed their will, there would be an end to our society of poverty and slavery.

Undershaft : The Hope of Mankind

Undershaft, like Shaw, is both capitalist and socialist, both egotist and altruist, and he is also original in being a disconcertingly honest man. His views accordingly involve a contradiction which can be resolved only on a higher dialectical plane. As an individual, Undershaft is ruthless and selfish; as an antagonist, he is formidable. But the universal Undershaft is the hope of mankind. When all men are like Undershaft, honest and explicit in the assertion of their desire, and determined to do their best for themselves, poverty and slavery will no longer be possible, for no man will tolerate subjection. Undershaft militant is a danger to all the world, but Undershaft triumphant is a benevolent deity shared by all, the very spirit of evolving mankind.

Shaw's Ideas About Revolution

The source of revolution, Shaw believed, is "rich men and aristocrats with a developed sense of life—men like Ruskin and William Morris and Kropotkin." But, however, it may have been with Ruskin in his later years, or with Morris, it is not at all clear to what degree Shaw himself—as distinct from Undershaft—was actually committed to the idea of violent revolution. For all the bluster of the Preface he wrote to *Major Barbara* or the heroic utterances of Don Juan in Hell, Shaw was singularly circumspect in his advocacy of force.

Shaw's Fabianism was certainly not founded on any moral objection to the use of force. Its basis appears to have been his distrust of the masses, and his conviction that those who are given power must first be educated in its use. In Shaw's view a violent revolution would be as ineffective ultimately in altering the social balance as was the Great Revolution of 1789, unless those who directed the battle were able to administer properly the fruits of their victory. In *Fabian Essays* reprinted in 1908—published three years after *Major Barbara* was written—Shaw took care once again to repudiate force as a political instrument. He accused Marx of being a liberal fatalist: "did he not say that force is the midwife of progress without reminding us that force is equally the midwife of chaos, and chaos the midwife of martial law?"

Undershaft Represents Life Force

Undershaft reflects the pugnacious aspect of the Life Force, the blind will which must enlist the intellectual and moral faculties in its

service if it is to avoid destroying what it has created. The Undershaft works in themselves are a mine of energy, as aimless and as dangerous as the lightning, and as potentially useful. Left to itself, the cannon factory is excellent evidence of what the Devil in *Man and Superman* says of humanity's self-destructive tendencies. But directed to a moral purpose it can help to bring about the seemingly impossible miracle of a super-humanity. For this reason, if for no other, it is necessary that Undershaft secures the succession in the proper line. When Barbara is in command of the cannon factory, and the advocates of violent revolution are at the end of the gun, we may look, presumably, for an end to slavery and exploitation. Power in itself is neither good nor evil. It may be the source of either. In *Major Barbara* it is a hopeful sign that the cannon factory is actively in search of the soul that will orient it toward the good, the Undershaft who will at last fulfil its destiny.

Undershaft's Militant Religion

This does not mean that Shaw was pacifist. An important advantage of Fabian gradualism was in the leisure it afforded in the preparation of the future: but as Shaw saw it, violence was very likely unavoidable, and it was always justifiable as a last resort. The cannon factory was an unfortunate, but necessary adjunct to social progress. Shaw had long ago insisted on adding a final warning to the Fabian "Manifesto" of 1884: "We had rather face a civil war than another century of suffering as the present one has been." In *Major Barbara*, Undershaft says:

> Poverty and slavery have stood up for centuries to your sermons and leading articles; they will not stand up to my machine guns. Dont preach at them: dont reason with them: kill them.

Undershaft's religion is militant in an extreme degree, and in this regard he is in complete accord with the Salvation Army. Undershaft desires to devote his energies to the destruction of evil, but he has no faith in the weapons of the Prince of Peace, nor has he time to use them. It is his faith, he tells Cusins, that there are two things necessary to Salvation:

> Undershaft: The two things are—
>
> Cusins: Baptism and—
>
> Undershaft: No. Money and gunpowder.
>
> Cusins: (*surprised, but interested*) That is the general opinion of our governing classes. The novelty is in hearing any man confess it.
>
> Undershaft: Just so.

Cusins : Excuse me : is there any place in your religion for honor, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth ?

Undershaft : Yes : they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life.

Comes to Terms With Capitalism

It is certainly arguable that in *Major Barbara* Shaw came to terms, in some measure, with capitalism, conceding that great industrial empires developed in the pure self-interest of their managers may create for their employees the very conditions which are the goal of socialist activity. In this manner, enlightened capitalism and socialism may be thought to converge : and in such enterprises the management may properly be expected to come into the hands of those best fitted to direct. The result would be an aristocracy based on ability which—once the purely parasitic elements were screened out—would approximate the conditions of state capitalism, and, on a sufficiently extensive basis of ownership, would in fact be state capitalism. Such seems to be the intimation in *Major Barbara.*

Life Force : A Creative Power

In this process of evolution, Undershaft represents an intermediate stage. His business, financed by the gentle but astute Lazarus, is the service of the Life Force in its destructive aspect. But the essential character of Life Force is not destructive. It is creative. The primal will is the will to live, and the will to live implies the will to live properly. In Shaw's view, material well-being is the necessary condition of spiritual health. The Salvation Army manifests its recognition of this truth by doing what it can to alleviate the hunger pangs of its converts. Undershaft goes further. He provides his employees with all the attributes of the good life, save freedom, which perhaps they neither need nor want, but without which they are less than completely human. It is for their spiritual liberation that he needs Barbara : presumably it is where his work leaves off that her work begins. The way of life, as at last she sees it, lies through the factory of death—

> Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow.

It is the Life Force that is important. "Let God's will be done for its own sake," Barbara says at the end of the play, "the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women." Presumably if humanity blows itself up in its effort to evolve, other means will be found to advance the vital energy that animates us.

Power : The Anarchist Dream

Cusins and Barbara, the poet and the saviour of souls, are going to make themselves the masters of armed power to blow up the society. That is the anarchist daydream. Against whom are they going to turn their guns ? We are shown confronting them the mob that lack the will to make war on poverty ; whether because, being rich, it is not to their interest to declare poverty the worst of crimes, or because, being poor, they cravenly console themselves for their poverty with their good conscience. This mob is Barbara's and Cusins's enemy : how are they going to overcome its obstruction and its inertia ? They face it alone, without allies. There is no help in the workers : out of a job, they are either brutish or broken, like Bill Walker or Peter Shirley in the Salvation Army shelter ; in a good job, like Undershaft's workers, their only ambition is to rise in the social scale, to join the Primrose League and shake hands with a duchess. Barbara and Cusins must themselves with their artillery blast poverty out of existence. But the concern that makes the guns for them is a capitalist concern. Cusins joins it, knowing that the faith of an armourer is that arms must be supplied to all who will pay for them.

"I want to make power for the world", says Cusins, as he takes over the armaments factory. He is going to make war on war, and do his bit to eradicate poverty.

Q. 27. Discuss *Major Barbara* as a religious play.

Or

Q. 28. In *Major Barbara* Shaw makes a strong plea for religious reforms. Elaborate.

Or

Q. 29. *Major Barbara* emphasises the need of suitable environment for religion and morality. Discuss.

Or

Q. 30. Shaw attacks orthodox dogmas of Christianity in *Major Barbara*. Do you agree ?

A Religious Play

Major Barbara is a great religious play. When the play was first published, Shaw was called irreligious, blasphemous, a "devil's disciple" ; so much so that Beatrice Webb called the play a "dance of the Devils". But with the passage of time, the religious greatness of the play has been admired. Everybody appreciates the "spiritual beauty" of Major Barbara, a great woman character

of Shaw. Oliver Lodge has defended Shaw from the charge of blasphemy. He writes :

> It is true he does not admire the ethics of the *Sermon on the Mount*—or, rather, he thinks them ineffectual and inadequate—but the sympathetic insight with which he interprets them, in spite of disagreement, is beyond praise. His treatment of the Christian religion, while yet, apparently, wishing to replace it by something more conducive to worldly success and prosperity—is the outcome of high genius.

In the contemporary drama if a member of the Salvation Army was among the characters, he or she was almost derided, invariably mocked and maligned. It is remarkable that in *Major Barbara* the Salvationists are treated with respect and as normal human beings. It was not Shaw's habit to follow the derisive mob. He was prompt to recognise nobility in a person or in an organization, and was equally prompt in defending the derided from contempt and scorn.

The Salvation Army

In *Major Barbara* Shaw conveys his religious beliefs through a presentation of the day-to-day working of the Salvation Army. The obsolete theology of the Salvation Army, however, did not prevent Shaw from perceiving the simple beauty of the average Salvationist's life or the great power for good the Army is. He had praised its brass bands when superior persons were busy sneering at them, and he knew better than any other writer, because of the enquiries made by the Webbs, that their social work was immensely beneficial both to the individual 'rescued' and the community. The Army could influence men and women who were impervious to the calls of other religious bodies.

Some years after Shaw had written *Major Barbara*, he was told a story about a Salvationist which had pleased him immensely. During a strike in South Africa which caused a good deal of distress, the religious leaders called a meeting of the strikers so that their physical needs, at least, could be satisfied. They decided that the strikers should be grouped according to their sect. The Anglican clergyman stood up and requested all those who belonged to the Church of England to stand over there. He was followed by the Roman Catholic priest and several nonconformist ministers who gave a similar direction. Then the Salvationist stood up and said, "All you chaps who don't belong to anybody, come to us !"

Orthodox Religion Exposed

But Shaw, like Andrew Undershaft, was a realist. He could not shut eyes to the evil of the orthodox religion. He exposed the hypocrisy and hollowness of the so-called 'conversions' and

'confessions'. People like Snobby Price confess their sins and are converted not because they are actually sinners or are really converted but because they are in need of food and shelter. Thus the Salvation Army offers the bribe of bread and the bribe of heaven, thereby encouraging hypocrisy and falsehood. The impression is created that one can commit a sin and later on repent at leisure. One can thus make the best of both the worlds.

Conversion : A Difficult Task

It is easy to convert starving people like Snobby Price, but it is rather difficult to convert well-fed and well-clothed people. They cannot be bribed easily. Andrew Undershaft challenges Barbara :

> It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms. Try your hand on my men : their souls are hungry because their bodies are full.

Barbara, however, accepts the challenge. At Perivale St. Andrews she tells Cusins :

> She will be appealing not to weak souls in starving bodies, sobbing with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, but fullfed, qurrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their little rights and dignities, and thinking that my father ought to be greatly obliged to them for making so much money for him—and so he ought. That is where slavation is really wanted. My father shall never throw it in my teeth again that my converts were bribed with bread.... I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake : the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done by living men and women.

Barbara's Conversion

Salvation is dependent on devildom. The tragedy of Barbara consists in the realization of the utter helplessness of the individual· When she makes the tragical discovery, she cries out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" When she finds that the temple of God has to be built by Mammon, that the seven deadly sins have to be conquered by money, she feels that the whole world is fast receding from beneath her feet. For as a Christian missionary, has she not preached against riches and said that a man cannot serve both God and Mammon ?

Major Barbara has yet another shock to get over. She discovers that not only are religious organizations dependent on the

charity of the rich who have earned money by fair means and foul, but even an individual can have no religion so long as he is poor. Poverty keeps the soul open to temptations and is, therefore, the greatest of crimes, because it is the fountain of all others. Snobby Price makes profession of repentance, invents confessions to get the wherewithal to satisfy his hunger, and then steals a sovereign at the earliest opportunity that offers itself. This acts as an eye opener to Major Barbara, who realizes that there can be no religion where men are not fullfed. She is in a state of spiritual desperation. Her religious professions have been proved to be hollow; her pride has been wounded but not killed. She, therefore, resolves to go to her father's works, where she will get "not weak souls in starved bodies," but fullfed, uppish creatures. That is where salvation is really needed, and that is where salvation gets a fair chance and fair play.

It is the realisation of this truth which makes her accept the challenge of her father, and return to the colours. Religion is not defeated, as some critics have said, but it comes out triumphant over all shams and affectations, better prepared, more determined to fight the devil. God's work will still be carried out with even greater enthusiasm, but without false sentiment and idealism which at present hamper true religious efforts.

Shaw Advocates Religious Reforms

Shaw is a realist and an anti-romantic. He is not against religion as such, but he is against evil practices that have overtaken religion. He, therefore, strongly advocates religious reforms. Undershaft becomes the mouthpiece of Shaw, when he says :

> Well, you have made for yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesn't fit the facts. Well, you scrap it. Scrap it and get one that does fit. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What's the result ? In machinery it does very well ; but in morals and religion and politics it is working at a loss that bring it nearer bankruptcy every year. Don't persist in that folly. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow.

Shaw is certainly not against religion, but he advocates that all that is old and out-dated in religion should be changed and brought closer to the needs of the people of the modern society.

Conclusion

In the presentation of reform—that of the Salvation Army or of religion in general and of Barbara in particular the play demonstrates in no uncertain terms the failure of the existing religions which are only the tools of the capitalists to keep the workers in slavery and submissiveness. Nevertheless, Shaw greatly admired the sincerity, courage and genius of such religious leaders as Barbara. True to the Undershaft inheritance, she is original in her religion and correctly interprets the teachings of Jesus Christ. She renounces the fireside for "larger loves and diviner dreams", voluntarily joins the least snobbish of the reform movements, refuses to accept less than Bill's soul for his misdeeds, and cannot be humbugged into the "Crosstianity" of Mrs Baines. Her superiority to moralists and her ardent zeal to carry on the work of God as against her personal gratification raise her to the stature of a true redeemer of mankind so that her heartbreak represents "vividly the pathos of Gethsemane, the tragedy of Calvary." Undershaft is quick to recognize the divine spark in Barbara and immediately resolves to reclaim her for God's purposes after furnishing her with a religion that fits the facts.

Q. 31. Write a note on *Major Barbara* as a great play of ideas.

Or

Q. 32. In *Major Barbara* Shaw discusses various social problems. Elaborate.

Or

Q. 33. *Major Barbara* is a beautiful interesting discussion in three acts. Comment.

Or

Q. 34. *Major Barbara* may be said to mark a very late stage in the development of the thesis play. Comment.

A Play of Ideas

Major Barbara has the peculiarly Shavian variety of Ibsenite dramatic structure, imitated from the Platonic dialogues. The play is replete with verbal debates, rationally conceived and conducted to a great extent—especially in the last act. This is the drama of ideas in exemplary form. The realism of its settings and the environment establish it as a critique of actual society. Changes of setting are matched by changes in dramatic style.

A Thesis Play

Major Barbara makes an impression of considerable originality, but Shaw did not invent the form. The form involved the dramatization of an issue which is first debated, then tested through a critical experiment. *Major Barbara* may be said to mark a very late stage in the development of the thesis play. The action, as in most plays of this type, takes place in a controlled environment. The play has two plot lines, convergent, but logically independent of one another. The first centres on the question of who is to inherit the Undershaft munitions works. The second culminates in Barbara's decision to leave the Salvation Army and to take service in the arms factory. The moral implications are of considerably greater interest than the events which generate them. *Major Barbara* is a play intended to provoke discussion, and the sentimental involvement of the characters, indispensable to a comedy designed for a wide public, are beggared by the importance of the theme This is developed principally in two scenes—the colloquy between Undershaft and Cusins in the Salvation Army shelter, and the triangular discussion in the munitions plant in the last act.

Shaw himself has called *Major Barbara* a "discussion in three Acts." A number of social problems are discussed in the play, and Shaw has punctured many a romantic illusion.

Religion

In Act Two of the play Shaw has given us a peep into the day-to-day working of the Salvation Army. He brings to our notice the good work being done by the salvationists as well as weaknesses of the organizations. The salvationists are devoted and sincere in their religious beliefs, but their 'conversions' and 'confessions' are mere sham and hypocrisy. The conversions are induced by the bribe of bread and treacle and the bribe of heaven. and there is no real change of heart. This is illustrated by the case of Snobby Price and Rummy. Undershaft challenges Barbara to come and convert his workers who are well-fed and well-clothed, because they cannot be bribed by "the bribe of money and the bribe of heaven." Barbara is made to realise that religion is not for "hungry bellies", that poverty is the worst of crimes, that poverty must be eradicated, before moral religious uplift can become possible.

Religious Reform

Therefore Shaw makes a strong plea for religious reforms. He points out that our religion is old, out-dated and does not fit the facts. So, it must be changed, as we scrap our old obsolete machinery and replace it by new and useful one. Therefore, the old and outmoded moral and religious codes must be scrapped as

old pieces of machinery. A. M. Thomas says that the central theme of the play is religious reform :

> Civilized society's primary business is to cast all its obsolete creeds and moral codes to the scrap heap and apply itself with all its might—even at the cost of bullets, blood and social revolution—not to the making of good men, but the making of healthy, strong men, to the elimination of the fit from the unfit, to the evolution of the Superman...

Poverty

Another social problem discussed in the play is poverty. Shaw says that poverty is the worst of crimes ; it is the root of all evil. He suggests elimination of poverty is the most pressing of human needs. To bring about a better world it is first of all necessary to manage a more equable distribution of the world's wealth. But in the nature of things it is unthinkable that the rich will willingly part with their possessions. Social justice is attainable, consequently, only through force. It is only when the socially minded are in control of the armed forces that the government can be induced to what is necessary to secure a good life for all. The way to salvation lies through the arms factory. Such is the gospel of Andrew Undershaft.

What is wrong with the world, says Undershaft, is what is wrong with its political, economic and religious institutions. The present attitude of society toward the poor, expressed in pious cliches like "poor but honest", is ridiculous. The first step, therefore, toward the reform of society is the removal of poverty.

Politics

But the present social institutions are not designed to remove poverty. The existing form of democracy, for instance, is in reality a plutocracy or an intellectual oligarchy at the worst. The *de facto* rulers of country are not the amateurs who sit in that "foolish gabble shop", the Parliament, but millionaires like Undershaft and Lazarus. Lady Britomart testifies that Undershaft and Lazarus have Europe positively under their thumbs. They are above all laws, national or international The inevitable conclusion then is that the present political system serves only to strengthen the capitalists and enslave the poor. The Parliament, the courts, law and the police legalize and sanctify this slavery of the poor to the rich.

Churches

The churches, like the Parliament, are powerless to oppose the evils of the system for, if they oppose it, the existing order

will forcibly suppress them. In fact, the bribe of bread and heaven administered by the religious institutions to the poor, as Mrs. Baines points out to Undershaft, keeps the Snobby Prices for breaking the rich men's windows. Thus by teaching the poor abject submission, the churches perpetuate capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. Moreover, letting Bodger and Undershaft buy their salvation with ill-gotten money is but a mockery of religion. Neither confession nor atonement is of much social use. Since expiation of misdeeds by a "manufactured penalty" continues as the prime tenet of even the gospel of St. William Booth, Shaw is driven to conclude that "at present there is not a single credible established religion in the world."

Religion of Power

For the religion of submission, Undershaft proposes to substitute the religion of power. It is his faith that the union of power and conscience—Cusins and Barbara—will in time bring about the earthly paradise The real power comes through money. There is no such thing as tainted money. Undershaft reminds Barbara that even she has been brought up on his money which she considers tainted. It is the money of Undershaft and other millionaires like him that keeps the Salvation Army Shelter going. The result of the discussion in the Shelter Scene is that Barbara realises that tainted money has got to be accepted.

Other Ideas

The discussion between Stephen and Undershaft highlights the futility of the contemporary system of education which fails to provide any useful work or profession to young men turned out of the universities.

The play also throws light on Shaw's views on crime and its punishment, on criminal law and justice and on the treatment of criminals.

Q. 35. Write a note on Shaw's women characters.

Or

Q. 36. "Shaw's women are not only to be loved, but respected, even feared." Discuss.

Or

Q. 37. "In Shavian drama, it is the women who usually take the initiative not only in love but in everything else." Discuss.

Shaw's Women Intellectualize Sexual Relations

"The world of Bernard Shaw has a large place for women. He honoured women, showing in his plays that they were not only to be

loved, but respected, even feared. Life with woman was as large a subject to him as religion. Though his love scenes burst with emotion he tended always to intellectualize sexual relations, and approached emotion as though it needed to be intellectually experienced" (Purdom) By that it does not mean that Shaw rationalized sex—rather he emphasized its irrationality. According to Purdom : "Sex as a natural force is capable of rational explanation, but, as Shaw well knew, its expression in experience is beyond rational control." Therefore it has to be approached with respect. That is why sex is never given frivolous treatment in his plays. It is a natural force of such power, so fundamental to the life of man, that while leading men into comic situations and having its comic aspects, it needs to be illuminated for man's salvation with the light of intelligence. A programme note upon the Don Juan in Hell episode when it was first performed at the Court Theatre in 1907 is worth recalling in this connection :

> Dona Ana, being a woman, is incapable both of the Devil's utter damnation and of Don Juan's complete supersensuality. As the mother of many children she has shared in the dawn travail, and with care and labour and suffering renewed the harvest of external life : but the honour and divinity of her works have been jealously hid from her by Man, who, dreading her domination, has offered her for reward only the satisfaction of her services and affections. She cannot, like the male Devil, use love as mere sentiment and pleasure ; nor can she, like the male saint, put love aside when it has once done its work as a developing and enlightening experience. Love is neither her pleasure nor her study ; it is her business. So she, in the end neither goes with Don Juan to heaven nor with the Devil and her father to the palace of pleasure, but declares that her work is not yet finished. For though by her death she is done with the bearing of men to mortal fathers, she may yet, as Woman Immortal, bear the Superman to the Eternal Father.

Shaw put the women in his plays on a pedestal with full consciousness that he was doing so. They had to be adored for the sake of the race, and love too must be lifted on the plane of consciousness for the sake of the future. In his love scenes, notably in *Your Never Can Tell, Man and Superman*, and *The Apple Cart*. Shaw says what no other dramatist has said, displaying the anatomy of love. Instead of supposing that he lacked a human heart, it would be nearer the truth to say that he had excess of it. He intellectualizes passion so as to bring it into the light of intellect.

Family Life and the Home

A further aspect of this attitude to women is that few of Shaw's plays are based upon to take their themes from family life

and the home. *The Devil's Disciple* shows a son's revolt against a disagreeable home ; in *Too True to be Good* a daughter escapes from a domineering mother in a dream-delirium ; in *Candida* the young children are left by their mother at the seaside ; and in *Heartbreak House* there is no sign of Hesione's young children Only in *Candida*, *Misalliance*, *Fanny's First Play* and *Buoyant Billions* is the action set firmly in a home provided by a woman. *Candida's* home, however, the poet abhors ; *Misalliance* is preceded by a long Treatise on Parents and Children ; and the Tarleton's is the comfortable home of a rich man, with a daughter looking for adventure which she has no hope of finding there : it is a picture of a commonplace domesticity tolerable to the outsider. *Fanny's First Play* is essentially a domestic piece, with two ordinary tradesmen's homes, but, again, there is a son in revolt in one and a daughter in the other. The very late *Buoyant Billions* presents two wealthy homes, one with a 'post-Atomist' son bent on world's betterment, discarding his father and home ; the other with a daughter, who escapes to the jungle, but return to get married and to be a 'working bee'. Neither of these homes contains a mother, and it seems that Shaw's attitude to the home is equivocal and uneasy.

The most interesting reference to the family is contained in *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* where a young clergyman sets up a household with two sisters, themselves the products of a group-marriage, which brings upon the island a United Nations' attack to reform his morals. The theme of group-marriage is not made explicit, though it is unmistakably there.

Great Gallery of Remarkable Women

It is noteworthy that it is the women who usually take the initiative in Shavian drama not only in love but in everything else. They are the driving force. "The most remarkable in this respect is Epifania Fitzfassenden, the millionairess trained as a boxer, for she is always ready to take chances and to venture, which Shaw regards as one of the greatest of human qualities. It is this apparently manish but essentially feminine woman, who speaks of the infinitely dangerous heart tearing everchanging life of adventure that we call marriage. This woman, ensnaring the mate chosen for her by Allah, is the type of all Shaw's women from Blanche to Clementine Buoyant. In that sense all his women are one women."

However the variety of Shaw's women is astonishing. All are impelled by passion of one kind or another : there are abundant examples of the passion of love, but as different from each other as women could be. Vivie in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Major Barbara, Lina in *Misalliance*, Lavinia in *Androcles and the Lion*, and Saint Joan, represent another kind of passion, the passion for conscience, for work, for a cause, for God. There are, however, other women such as Mrs. Warren, Lady Cicely, Mrs. Clandon, Lady Britomart, Mrs. Tarleton, Lady Utterword, and Queen Catherine of Braganza

who belong to the world, and Candida who belongs to herself. Such a gallery of remarkable women does not exist in the works of any other modern dramatist.

Women Characters Superior to Men

Woman has always been a mystery for man How could Shaw be certain about her. The impression of women left by the plays of Shaw is not, at first blush, inspiring. But the fact remains that in Shaw's plays there are more great women : there are more unpleasant women than unpleasant men. However in later plays Shaw kept an even balance. Eve indeed, dwarfs Adam and Cain in Part I of *Back to Methuselah*. Lady Chavender is, perhaps, the best person in *On the Rocks*, where men apart from Sir Arthur, make a poor show.

Sex and Love

Shavian women usually take the initiative in sex and love, and Shaw proves this through his theory of the Life Force. According to Shaw's theory of the Life Force or the Creative Evolution, the initiative in sex comes from the woman : "Woman must marry because the race must perish without her travail......It is assumed that the woman must wait motionless, until she is moved. Nay, she often does wait motionless."

Examples of the thing actually at work in the plays are numerous, but of course, Ann Whitefield is the most complete embodiment of the theory—she is perhaps simply and solely that.

Q. 38. **Write a note on Shaw's place in literature.**

Or

Q. 39. **Bring out a general estimate of Shaw as a creative artist.**

Or

Q. 40. **Write a note on the popularity of Shaw as a playwright and his influence on the contemporary life.**

Shaw : The Greatest Modern Dramatist

After his early years of struggle, Shaw's fame grew steadily until he reached the position of the greatest playwright of the twentieth century, not only amongst the English-speaking nations but throughout the world. Whether future ages will confirm his present great reputation only time can decide.

Shakespeare's genius is so different in almost every way from Shaw's that despite Shaw's occasional pretence of despising

Shakespeare's intelligence, any comparison between them is idle foolishness. Most of Shakespeare's great characters are creatures of passion—love, hate, jealousy, greed of power—and the reality of the characters, combined with the marvellous power and beauty of the language in which they reveal themselves, carries reader and the spectator away by conquering his imagination. Shakespeare is supreme in the realm of poetic drama ; Shaw's greatest gifts are not in the sphere of poetry but in the field of wit, of ideas, of flashing intelligence. He neither can nor wants to imitate Shakespeare as a creator of character, because he is too deeply concerned with his own problems.

Shaw's Style

Shaw's style can touch at times poetic heights, but in general it is less moving than interesting. It is a perfect instrument for his purpose, which generally consists more in the explanation of a problem than in the development of an imagined character. Only when one of his characters happens to embody completely a problem near to Shaw's heart, does he give free play to the great poetic powers of which he is capable. Perhaps the finest example of the heights to which he can rise at such moments is Joan's great speech in the trial scene or the noble words of Lilith that close *Back to Methuselah*

His Characters

The main quality which made Shaw a great dramatist was neither his powerful intelligence nor even his lively imagination, but the great moral passion which made him the man he is. In all his finest works he is deeply concerned with the same great problem—the state of the world and of society, the means to its improvement, its final destiny. This is, indeed, the main reason why most of his plays are "problem plays" in a sense which makes them different in kind from those of Shakespeare. His characters do not come before the problems ; they are means to solve the problems. His finest creations are those of characters expressing his own ruling passion—the girl-heroines like Saint Joan, Lavinia or Barbara Undershaft. This is not to say that he was unable to draw characters who do not fit into this framework. His studies of Caesar and Napoleon, his modern business-men and many of his comic characters disprove this, but it remains true that the characters most closely connected with the problem nearest to his heart are generally his best.

Shaw and His Contemporaries

When Shaw began to write plays, the English stage was either filled with translation of French plays, or dominated by men like Pinero or H. A. Jones, who were, with very few exceptions, satisfied with imitating the French society play, which they more or less

skilfully adapted to English conditions. Although they slightly changed their approach and even their outlook under the influence of the new movement in drama, they were hopelessly old-fashioned in comparison with the ideas and methods which Shaw brought to the theatre.

The most interesting exceptions among the dramatists of the generation which ruled the stage during Shaw's youth were two men who in their different ways seem to show some similarity to Shaw's own work ; they were W. S. Gilbert and Oscar Wilde. Gilbert is known to have achieved fame as the brilliant author of the satires which are still very much alive. On the other hand, Oscar Wilde was, like Shaw, born in Dublin, and in the same year as Shaw though he died fifty years ago (1900). He used his great gifts mainly for the construction of very effective and very successful society play which are today rather old-fashioned, though still amusing. His greatest similarity to Shaw lies in his witty dialogue which for sheer brilliance even Shaw could not equal. Although Shaw and Wilde did not meet very frequently, Shaw had a high opinion of Wilde's artistic gifts, and maintained his friendship for him even during the tragic last years of Wilde's life. As a dramatist he may have been impressed by Wilde as a master of brilliant dialogue, but in almost every other respect his ideas of dramatic art are wholly different from Wilde's.

Ibsen's Influence on Shaw

It would, however, be wrong to view Shaw's place in modern literature entirely in comparison with the English and Irish dramatists of his time. From the beginning of his artistic life Shaw was strongly influenced by non-English and non-literary forces. As far as literature and particularly the drama were concerned, he owed more to Ibsen than to any Englishman—not as a model to imitate but as a challenge to meet. Ibsen, with his knowledge of all the tricks of the stage and his biting criticism of social pretences and prejudices, was a revelation to Shaw. Nevertheless it may fairly be said that Shaw grew into a greater artist than Ibsen because he had something new and constructive to put into the place of society which both dramatists criticised so effectively.

Shaw's Influence on Public Life

Through his socialism Shaw was in close touch with all the trends of political thought in Europe. Marx and Lenin, Wagner and Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Bergson formed part of his world, and his own view of life and society was worked in constant struggle with the thoughts of the most powerful minds of other countries. In this process he often had to change some of his opinions, but by keeping his mind open to new influences he kept it elastic and alive.

For all these reasons Bernard Shaw has been one of the greatest personal influences on the educated public of the whole

world. No one would claim, of course, that his influence has always been a good one. Nevertheless, it is true to say that in most cases Shaw has been on the side of the angels even when great courage was needed to give public expression to his convictions. As a dramatist he has taught people to laugh at things which had been thoughtlessly admired and to hate systems which had little in their favour but their power to stifle opposition. As a thinker he has used his great powers to put forward persuasively and interestingly ideas which were far more popular with many of his readers. His works express an unusually attractive personality—strong-minded fair, almost incredibly good-tempered, though sometimes seriously ill-balanced in his judgements.

Conclusion

If greatness consists in being irreplaceable, Bernard Shaw's greatness is assured. Perhaps the most characteristic sign of his greatness is the fact that, in spite of his fame, there has never been a school of dramatists who tried to imitate him.

Q. 41. What does Shaw mean by his idea of a new Dionysos ?

Or

Q. 42. What are the characteristics of Greek drama which we find in *Major Barbara* ?

Or

Q. 43. "The Euripidean verses in the second act of *Major Barbara* are not by me, nor even directly by Euripides. They are by Professor Gilbert Murray, whose English version of *The Bacchae* came into our dramatic literature with all the impulsive power of an original work before *Major Barbara* was begun. The play, indeed, stands indebted to him in more ways than one." Comment on this statement of Shaw.

Or

Q. 44. Do you find Greek drama as the source of inspiratic of *Major Barbara* ? If so, substantiate your answer.

Or

Q. 45. What echoes of Greek drama do you find in *Major Barbara* ?

Introduction

Cusins nicknames Undershaft 'Prince of Darkness' and 'Mephistopheles', as well as 'Dionysos' and 'Mechiavelli'. Critics have, therefore, found certain connections between *Major Barbara*

and Greek drama, particularly *The Bacchae*. It may well be asked what Shaw means by his idea of a 'new' Dionysos. What has the ancient Greek god to do with modern society? But before we proceed further let us have the elementary knowledge about *The Bacchae* and Dionysos.

The Bacchae

The plot of *The Bacchae* is summarised below :

> The god Dionysos, with his Wild Women in fairly remote attendance on him, arrives in his own land, 'changed in shape from God to man' but determined
>
> ...to show me in men's sight
> Manifest God
>
> Because they have mocked and scorned him, he has sent a madness on the women of the household, and he now proposes to put an end to King Pentheus, who is bent on repudiating him. He allows himself to be captured by Pentheus, to be bound and led into the palace. An earthquake shakes the palace and Dionysos emerges unbound. In a great fury Pentheus rushes after him but he gradually succumbs to the God's will. He agrees to go disguised as a woman to watch the Bacchae (whose rites to Dionysos a messenger brilliantly describes). Pentheus goes, is discovered, and in accordance with the divine prophecy is torn to fragments. His mother, Agave, returns with his head, which in her transport of madness she thinks is that of a lion. The bacchic blindness is slowly lifted and she discovers the truth. Pentheus's body, painstakingly put together, is brought in. Dionysos appears, pronounces his doom on the wretched humans, and ascends in triumph to heaven.

The Myth of Dionysos

The myth of Dionysos, which according to Murray, is the source of Greek drama, hence of western drama, and which Euripides repeats in essential structure in *The Bacchae*, was bound up with early pagan religion, the beliefs and rituals surrounding which were an exaltation of a recurring revolution in the natural order of the world. Dionysos was specifically connected with the advent of the new year and the retreat of the old. He is therefore a god of vegetation; he is god of both death and life, of both impotence and fertility; a destroyer as well as a creator, a prince of the Underworld come to assert his kingdom in the world of men.

Echo of 'The Bacchae'

Is there any resemblance between the foregoing and *Major Barbara*? Obviously no absolute resemblance but there is so

insistent an echo of *The Bacchae* that we cannot regard it as accident. Consider Cusins first. This Professor of Greek is practically a spokesman of Euripides He cites him readily, 'quotes' some Euripidean stanzas, equates the work done by the Salvation Army with the Dionysian ecstasy. He refers to Undershaft as the 'Prince of Darkness' and as 'Dionysos'. He loses himself completely to this modern god and leads the dithyramb with resounding bangs on his bass drum. Then as though, Shaw were putting the final archetypal touch to Cusins's 'conversion', he has him spend the evening imbibing the god's Spanish burgundy. Cusins explains : "I think it was Dionysos who made me drunk...I told you I was possessed."

Possessed by Undershaft, who whether 'manifest God' or not, has returned to his home and visits the Salvation Army Shelter to claim his favourite daughter, Barbara, for his own. At the Shelter he brings his 'divine alchemy' to bear on Cusins. on the entire Salvation Army, eventually on Barbara : the 'divine alchemy' of Money. Gunpowder, the second part of his creed, is presented at his armaments factory. The destructive power in this, so vividly and 'brutally' indicated in the mutilated dummy soldiers on the stage and Undershaft's 'callous' talk of slaughtered armies, may be related to the dismembering and mutilation of Pentheus in *The Bacchae*. But Pentheus's body, we may remember, was put together again : this signifies that restoration grew out of death. So money and gunpowder shall destroy poverty and the ideals that tolerated poverty in order to restore prosperity to the world.

Reference to Earthquake

Barbara herself plays no active role in the Dionysian mystery : she is acted upon, and finds herself, as she says, as though in the midst of an earthquake :

> I stood on the rock I thought eternal ; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me, an army marching to Salvation with me ; and in a moment, at the stroke of your pen in a cheque book, I stood alone ; and the heavens were empty. That was the first shock of the earthquake : I am waiting for the second.

The second shock comes. Then it is revealed to her that if she grasps the power of money and gunpowder, she can have a power for good also. The reference to earthquake reminds us of the earthquake in *The Bacchae*.

The Heavenly City

The scene at Perivale St. Andrew brings out Shaw's belief that salvation of the soul without the prior salvation of the body was hopeless. But we may detect something more than sociological comment here, for Undershaft's city, as Shaw describes it, surely

suggests a panorama of the Grecian idyll, with tall, slender factory chimneys imaging the pillars of ancient temples, and the eminence from which we gaze down (here, where a huge cannon is mounted and the high explosives are made) suggesting the seat of Zeus himself. Alongside this visual contrast is the allegory of change, the implied opposition between hunger and satisfaction, degradation and uppishness, winter and summer. Undershaft's description of poverty suggests the deathly chill of winter; the noisome breath of the plague:

> Poverty blights whole cities; spreads horrible pestilence; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it.

Characteristics of Greek Drama

But there are other characteristics of Greek drama which we find in *Major Barbara*. The *parabasis* (part sung by chorus in Greek comedy, addressed to audience), for example, is custom-built for Undershaft as he swings into one of his Shavian speeches on poverty. The chorus is Cusins as he stands between Undershaft and Barbara, commenting on each and interpreting their religious conflict to the audience—a perfectly natural thing for a 'collector of religions' to do. The messenger is Bill Walker: at least, his return to the Shelter after his humiliation under the knees of the terrible Todger and his tale of ignominy may be seen as the old practice turned to excellent modern account. Then, there is the Discovery, or revelation of hidden identity, which Shaw employs in Cusins's disclosure of his origins.

Conclusion

Now it will be agreed that all this amounts to fairly loose imitation, and as such is not worth much more than momentary surprise.

Q. 46. Write a brief note on the Shelter Scene of *Major Barbara*.

Or

Q. 47. Bring out the significance of the Shelter Scene.

Or

Q. 48. At the play's climax, in the second act, Barbara's heart is broken. Comment.

Or

Q. 49. Shaw shatters Major Barbara's illusions about religion in the Shelter Scene. Elucidate.

Or

Q. 50. The theme of the play is restated in Act Two of *Major Barbara*. Comment.

Introduction

Act Two of *Major Barbara* is the most significant act of the play. In this Act we see Barbara, the selfless, efficient organiser of her shelter In the midst of poverty, faced with difficult customers of different kinds in Peter Shirley and Bill Walker, she is always in control. Her sympathy and human warmth are shown in her dealings with Peter Shirley.

Shaw's Attitude to Religion

The first hint in the play of Shaw's attitude to his religious ideas comes out in the Shelter Scene. After Barbara has guessed that Peter Shirley is not a Christian, she says : "My own father's a Secularist, I think. Our Father—yours and mine—fulfils himself in many ways ; and I daresay he knew what he was about when he made a Secularist of you " The implication that true religion is to be found in an attitude sincerely held, however unorthodox it may be, is something that Shaw is to return to in the play and also in *Androcles and the Lion*.

The Theme

In the Shelter Scene the theme of the play is restated. We have already been given vivid examples of the evil effects of poverty, which has been shown to cause hypocrisy, lying and loss of self-respect ; now Shaw brings his spokesman (Undershaft) back on to the scene. Immediately the theme of the play is restated for us when Undershaft tells Barbara that *his* religion is being a millionaire.

The antithetical exchange between Shirley and Undershaft leaves us in no doubt as to the point Shaw was trying to put over. Barbara has just said "Youre not a Millionaire, are you, Peter ?"

Shirley : No : and proud of it.

Undershaft : (*gravely*) Poverty, my friend, is not a thing to be proud of.

Shirley : (angrily) Who made your millions for you ? Me and my like. Whats kep us poor ? Keepin you rich. I wouldnt have your conscience, not for all your income.

Undershaft : I wouldnt have your income not for all your conscience, Mr. Shirley.

Money and Gunpowder

Undershaft and Cusins did not have a great deal to say to one another in Act One, but in Act Two they make up for it. Cusins is immediately taken by Undershaft's honesty when he says that the only two things necessary for salvation are money and gunpowder. The short section following this revelation is of great interest since it expresses Shaw's opinions. Undershaft insists on the necessity of acquiring "money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master."

The Trinity

In this scene Cusins calls Undershaft by different names. Undershaft shouts that one and the same power of madness possesses the maker of cannons, the translator of Euripides, and Barbara, the saviour of souls ; and since this trinity has nothing to do with the "common mob of slaves and idolaters," the saviour of souls must belong to the maker of cannons, not to the Salvation Army. If we will understand Shaw's ideas as he himself felt them, then the religion of money and gunpowder is the Dionysian frenzy of this trinity. Money is life ; the Plutonic power of the capitalist is itself the creative vitality which the energetic spirits forswore in order to gain that Plutonic power.

Shaw is concerned to show not only that the Dionysian creative energy of money is the same creative energy as in religion and poetry, but also to show that in money above all this energy attains its highest potency. Therefore, when Cusins warns him that Barbara, like Cusins himself, is in love with the common people and that Undershaft's gospel will never get her away from the Salvation Army, Undershaft is made to reply :

"My friend : I never ask for what I can buy."

Barbara is not to be won "through religion alone," as Undershaft said. In order to demonstrate that power resides in money, she is to be bought.

Barbara's Illusions Shattered

Barbara has been holding a street corner meeting in which Snobby Price testified how he used to beat his mother and how he has found salvation. And he has collected some money. If Snobby had given his mother just one more kick, Barbara says to him, they would have got the whole five shillings. Undershaft offers to contribute the odd 'twopence'. 'The millionare's mite'. But Barbara refuses to have this money since her father has made this money by selling armaments. She tells her father : "Put it back in your pocket. You cant buy your Salvation here for twopence : you must work it out."

This is one of Shaw's great moments These two pennies are money itself; all money is symbolized in these two copper coins that have circulated all through society. But now the flow of their circulation stops, though behind these two pennies is weight of a million pounds. Like Barbara, in a scene which this one recalls, Christ also looked at a penny, the symbol of all money and said, "Render unto caesar the things that are caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" Undershaft would say that all things are caesar's, though he would call caesar God.

Having thus shown what is at stake in the battle between Barbara and Undershaft, Shaw makes him renew his attack. When Bill Walker offers a sovereign to atone for having smashed Jenny's face, Barbara refuses to accept, and Bill sneers that, being an earl's grand-daughter, Barbara would look at nothing less than a hundred pounds. Undershaft sees his chance again and offers the other ninety-nine; again he is repulsed. Then come Undershaft's victory when Mrs. Baines accepts his generous offer of pounds 5,0.0 Bill Walker says aside to Barbara "Wot prawce Selvytion nah?" Salvation has become a commodity and capitalism has conquered.

Undershaft has bought the Church of the poor, and Barbara with it, as he said he would. He and Cusins wink at each other over Barbara's bowed head. Barbara is left alone: "My God: why hast thou forsaken me?" Everything can be bought; money is triumphant.

Conclusion

In the Shelter Scene the work of Shaw reaches its greatest height. The greatest moment of the play comes with the shock that Barbara experiences. Barbara is so dispirited by the fact that her father has shown it is possible to buy the Army that she feels that she cannot go to the big meeting and that she may never pray again. As the procession goes off she is led to say, "Drunkenness and Murder! My God: why hast thou forsaken me?"—a deliberate echo of Christ's words on the cross that was to provoke the charge of blasphemy at the time of the play's first production.

The Shelter Scene ends with Barbara very near defeat. She is forced to face the fact that Snobby Price is a fraud and that she has lost the chance of converting Bill Walker, as he has seen that money can be of greater value than souls. It is not surprising that when we next see her she has discarded her Salvation Army uniform.

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Chronology of Important Dates

1850 Shaw's father's civil service post in Dublin abolished.

1856 Shaw born on 26 July in Dublin.

1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species* published.

1867 Shaw attends the first of his four Dublin Schools.

1867 Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* published.

1871 Darwin's *Descent of Man* published.

1875 Shaw's first contribution to the press.

1876 Leaves Dublin for London.

1879 Writes first novel, *Immaturity*.

1880 Writes second novel, *The Irrational Knot*.

1881 Writes third novel, *Love Among the Artists*.

1882 Writes fourth novel, *Cashel Byron's Profession*.

1883 Writes fifth and last novel (incomplete), *An Unsocial Socialist*.

1884 Fabian Society founded.

1884 Joins Fabian Society.

1885 Reviews books for *Pall Mall Gazette* until 1888.

1885 His father dies. One of his speeches converts Annie Besant to Socialism.

1886 Writes Fabian articles for Annie Besant's *Our Corner*... Art Critic to *The World* until 1889.

1888 Music Critic for *The Star* until 1890 under the name of Corno di Bassetto.

1890 Music Critic for *The World*.

1891 Writes *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.

1892 First play, *Widower's Houses*, produced.

1893 Writes *The Philanderer*.

1893 Writes *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

1894 Writes *Arms and the Man* and *Candida*. Shaw's first stage successes.

1895 Dramatic Critic for *Saturday Review* until 1898.

1895 Writes *The Man of Destiny*, *You Never Can Tell* and *The Sanity of Art*.

1896 Writes *The Devil's Disciple*.

1896 Meets Charlotte Payne-Townshend, later Mrs. Shaw.

1898 Married Charlotte Payne-Townshend.

1898 Writes *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

1898 *Mrs. Warren's Profession* produced.

1898 *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant* published.

1899 Writes *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*.

1901-03 *Man and Superman* (produced in 1903) began Shaw's great period.

1901-03 First play to have a full-scale Shavian preface.

1904 Writes *John Bull's Other Island.*

1904 Writes *How He Lied to Her Husband.*

1904 Vedrenne-Barker management at Royal Court Theatre begins.

1905 Writes *Major Barbara.*

1906 Writes *The Doctor's Dilemma.* Bought "Shaw's Corner" at Ayot, St. Lawrence.

1908 Writes *Getting Married.*

1912 Writes *Androcles and the Lion* and *Pygmalion.*

1914 Writes *Commonsense About the War.*

1920 Writes *Back to Methuselah. Heartbreak House* produced.

1923 Writes *Saint Joan.*

1925 Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.

1928 *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism* published.

1929 Writes *The Apple Cart.*

1943 Mrs. Shaw died.

1947 Writes his last complete play at the age of 91, *Buoyant Billions.*

1950 Shaw died at his home in Ayot, St. Lawrence, November 2nd.

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